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JOURNAL  
of a Voyage  
TO  
NORTH AMERICA.



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JOURNAL  
of a Voyage  
TO  
NORTH AMERICA.

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Translated from the French of PIERRE  
FRANÇOIS XAVIER DE CHARLEVOIX.  
Edited, with Historical Introduction,  
Notes and Index, by LOUISE PHELPS  
KELLOGG, PH.D.

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IN TWO VOLUMES: VOLUME II.



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CHICAGO:  
THE CAXTON CLUB.  
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JOURNAL  
OF A  
VOYAGE  
TO  
NORTH-AMERICA.

Undertaken by ORDER of the

FRENCH KING.

CONTAINING

The GEOGRAPHICAL Description and Natural  
History of that Country, particularly

CANADA.

TOGETHER WITH

An Account of the CUSTOMS, CHARACTERS,  
RELIGION, MANNERS and TRADITIONS  
of the original Inhabitants.

In a Series of Letters to the Duchefs of LESDIGUIERES.

Translated from the French of P. DE CHARLEVOIX.

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VOL. II.

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Historical  
Survey

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C O N T E N T S  
OF THE  
SECOND VOLUME.

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# JOURNAL

## of a Voyage

Made by Order of the *French* King through  
NORTH AMERICA.

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### LETTER SEVENTEENTH.

*Description of Lake Erie. Voyage as far as Detroit or the Narrows. Project for a Settlement in this Place. Cause of its Failure. Council called by the Commandant of Fort Pontchartrain, and the Subject of it. Of the Games of the Indians.*

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FORT PONTCHARTRAIN IN THE NARROWS,<sup>1</sup> June 8, 1721.

MADAM,

I SET out on the 27th of last month from the entrance of lake Erie after sealing my last letter, and though it was then late I made three leagues farther that day with the advantage of a favourable wind and the finest

<sup>1</sup>The translator gives us the English word for the narrow passage between Lakes Erie and Huron, now known by its French form Detroit.

weather

weather in the world. The course is by coasting along the north shore amounting to a hundred leagues. The way turning off towards the south from Niagara is <sup>[2]</sup> much more agreeable but longer by one half. Lake Erie is a hundred leagues in length from east to west. Its breadth from north to south is thirty leagues, or thereabouts. The name it bears is that of an Indian nation of the Huron language, which was formerly seated on its banks, and who have been entirely destroyed by the Iroquois. Erie in that language signifies Cat, and in some accounts this nation is called the Cat nation.<sup>2</sup> This name comes probably, from the large quantity of these animals formerly found in this country. They are no larger than ours and their skins are reckoned very valuable. Some modern maps have given lake Erie the name of Conti, but with no better success than the names of Conde, Tracy, and Orleans which have been given to the lakes Huron, Superior and Michigan.

On the 28th I advanced nineteen leagues, and found myself opposite to a river called, *La grande Rivière*, or the Great River, which runs from the eastward in 42 deg. 15 min.<sup>3</sup> The largest trees however were not as yet covered with leaves. Excepting this circumstance, the country appeared to me extremely beautiful. We made little way the 29th, and none at all the 30th. We embarked again on the morrow before sunrise, and advanced a good way. The 1st. of June being the day of Pentecost, after having sailed up a beautiful river for the space of an hour, which has its rise as they say at a great distance, and runs betwixt two fine meadows; we passed over a carrying place of about sixty paces in breadth, in order to avoid turning round a

<sup>2</sup>The Iroquois war of extermination of the Erie tribe occurred about 1656. The cats were wildcats or lynx.

<sup>3</sup>The present Grand River of southwestern Ontario. This river ran through the territory of the Neutrals, a tribe like the Hurons and the Erie destroyed by the Iroquois.



point which is called *the long Point*;<sup>4</sup> it is a very sandy spot of ground, and naturally bears a great quantity of vines. The <sup>[3]</sup> following days I saw nothing remarkable, but coasted along a charming country, hid at times by very disagreeable prospects, which however are of no great extent. Wherever I went ashore I was quite enchanted by the beauty and variety of a landscape, which was terminated by the noblest forests in the whole world. Add to this, that every part of it swarms with water fowl; I cannot say whether the woods afford game in equal profusion; but I well know that on the south side there is a prodigious quantity of Buffaloes.

Were we always to sail as I then did, with a serene sky in a most charming climate, and on water as clear as that of the purest fountain; were we sure of finding every where secure and agreeable places to pass the night in, where we might enjoy the pleasure of hunting at a small expence, breathe at our ease the purest air, and enjoy the prospect of the finest countries in the universe, we might possibly be tempted to travel to the end of our days. I recalled to memory those ancient Patriarchs who had no fixed place of abode, who lived in tents, who were in a manner the masters of all the countries they passed through, and who enjoyed in peace and tranquillity all their productions, without the plague inevitable in the possession of a real and fixed estate. How many oaks represented to me that of Mamre? how many fountains put me in mind of that of Jacob? each day a new situation chosen at pleasure; a neat and commodious house built and furnished with all necessaries in less than a quarter of an hour, and floored with a pavement of flowers, continually springing up on a carpet of the most beautiful green; on all sides simple and

<sup>4</sup>Still called Long Point in Norfolk County, Ontario.

natural beauties unadulterated and inimitable by any art. <sup>[4]</sup> If these pleasures sometimes suffer a little interruption, whether by hard weather or some other unforeseen accident, it is only to render them more sensibly felt at a second enjoyment.

Were I inclined to moralize I might add, that these alternatives of pleasure and disappointment, which I have already undergone since my setting out, are very proper to make us sensible that there is no kind of life more capable of placing this maxim constantly before our eyes, that we are no more than pilgrims on the earth, and that we have no right to use but as passengers, the good things of this world; that the real wants of man are very few in number, that little is sufficient to purchase contentment, and that we ought to take in good part those evils and crosses which surprize us, since with the same rapidity they make way for a mixture of better fortune. Lastly, how many things contribute in this way of life to make us sensible of our dependance on the divine providence, which in order to produce this mixture of good and evil, makes not use of the passions of men but of the vicissitudes of seasons, which may entirely be foreseen, and the caprice of the elements which we ought to look for: and consequently what a multitude of opportunities of meriting by our confidence in, and resignation to the divine will? It is generally said that long voyages are seldom attended with a large crop of divine grace; nothing however is more proper to produce it than this sort of life.

On the fourth we stopt a good part of the day on a point which runs north and south three leagues, and which is called *Pointe Pélée*, or Bald Point.<sup>5</sup> It is however well enough wooded on the west <sup>[5]</sup> side, but that of the

<sup>5</sup> In Essex County, Ontario.



east is a sandy track producing nothing but red cedars, of an indifferent growth and in small quantities. The white cedar is of more general use than the red, the wood of which is easily broken, and is only fit for making small pieces of furniture. It is a notion in this country that women with child should not use it in busks.<sup>6</sup> The leaves of this tree yield no odour but the wood does. Quite the reverse happens in the white cedar. There are a great number of bears in this country, and more than four hundred of these animals were killed last winter on *Pointe Pélée* alone.

On the fifth towards four o'clock in the afternoon we perceived the land on the south shore, and two little islands which lie very near it. These are called Rattlesnake islands, and we are told they are so infested with these reptiles that the air is infected with them.<sup>7</sup> We entered the Narrows an hour before sunset, and passed the night above a very beautiful island, called L'isle de Bois Blanc, or White-wood island.<sup>8</sup> From Long-point to the Narrows the course is always west; from the entry of the Narrows to the island of St. Claire,<sup>9</sup> which is five or six leagues, and thence to Lake Huron it bends somewhat towards the east, inclining to the south; thus the whole of the Narrows, which are thirty-two leagues long, lies between 42 degrees 12 or 15 minutes, and 43 degrees and a half north latitude. Above the island of St. Claire, the Narrows widen and form a lake, which has either received its name

<sup>6</sup> Busks is an old English word for stays.

<sup>7</sup> The present Sister Islands in the western end of Lake Erie.

<sup>8</sup> Still called by this name, this island lies opposite Amherstburg near the mouth of the Detroit River (the Narrows).

<sup>9</sup> The island called St. Claire appears to be the one later known as Hog Island, now Belle Isle Park of the city of Detroit. The name St. Claire was first applied in 1679 by La Salle's party who sailed through this lake and river in the bark *Griffon*.

from

from the island, or given it its own. It is about six leagues long and as many broad in some places.

<sup>161</sup> It is pretended that this is the finest part of all Canada, and really if we may judge by appearances, nature seems to have refused it nothing that can contribute to make a country delightful; hills, meadows, fields, lofty forests, rivulets, fountains, rivers, and all of them so excellent in their kind, and so happily blended, as to equal the most romantic wishes; the lands however are not all equally proper for every sort of grain, but most are of a wonderful fertility, and I have known some produce good wheat for eighteen years running without any manure, and besides all of them are proper for some particular use. The islands seem placed on purpose for the pleasure of the prospect; the river and lake abound in fish, the air is pure, and the climate temperate and extremely wholesome.

Before you arrive at the fort, which stands on the left, a league below the island of St. Claire, you find on the same side two pretty populous villages very near each other; the first is inhabited by the Tionnontatez a tribe of the Hurons, and the same who after having wandered to and fro for a long time, first settled at the falls of St. Mary, and at Michillimakinac;<sup>10</sup> the second is inhabited by the Poutewatamie Indians.<sup>11</sup> On the right, somewhat

<sup>10</sup> This was the division of the Hurons at present known as the Wyandot. Driven in 1650 from their homes in Bruce Peninsula, Ontario, they wandered for a half century in Wisconsin and northern Michigan. In 1671 they built a village at St. Ignace, on the north shore of Mackinac Straits. Thence in 1701 they were invited by Cadillac to remove to Detroit. In Charlevoix's time the Huron village was on the west bank of the Detroit River; later it was removed to the east bank to the neighborhood of Sandwich, Ontario.

<sup>11</sup> The Potawatomi in 1641 occupied the islands at the head of Green Bay; thence they spread around the southern shore of Lake Michigan; and in 1701 a portion of the tribe accepted Cadillac's invitation to form a village on Detroit River. In 1833 this tribe sold all their lands east of the Mississippi and removed to Kansas. A portion of the Wisconsin bands retired into the northeastern part of that state, where they now dwell.

higher is a third village of the Outawais, inseparable companions of the Hurons from the time that both of them were driven from their country by the Iroquois;<sup>12</sup> there are no christians at all among these last, and few if any amongst the Poutewatemies; the Hurons are all christians, but have no missionaries; it is said they will admit of none, but this is only true of a few of their principal men who have not much religion, and <sup>17</sup> who do not suffer the others to be heard, who have been a long time desirous of having missionaries sent them.<sup>13</sup>

It is a long time since the importance of the place, still more than the beauty of the country about the Narrows has given ground to wish, that some considerable settlement were made in this place; this has been tolerably well begun some fifteen years since, but certain causes of which I am not informed, have reduced it almost to nothing; those who are against it alledge first, that it would bring the trade for the northern furs too near the English, who as they are able to afford their commodities to the Indians cheaper than we, would draw all that trade into the province of New York. Secondly, that the lands near the Narrows are not fertile, and that the whole surface to the depth of nine or ten inches consists of sand, below which is hard clay impenetrable to the water; from whence it happens that the plains and interior parts of the woods are always drowned; that every where you see nothing but diminutive ill-grown oaks, and hard walnut-trees, and that the trees having their roots always under water

<sup>12</sup> The Ottawa, first dwelling on Manitoulin Island, fled in 1650 with the Hurons to Wisconsin. In 1660 they built a village on Chequamegon Bay, a decade later removed to St. Ignace, whence a portion of the tribe migrated and built a village on Detroit River. Another portion remained in northern Michigan, and some of them yet live on Little Traverse Bay. The Detroit Ottawa finally removed to Oklahoma.

<sup>13</sup> Missionary work was reëstablished for the Detroit Hurons soon after Charlevoix's visit, and maintained throughout the French régime. See *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, xvii, 102, 459.

their

their fruits ripen very late. These reasons have not been unanswered; it is true that in the neighbourhood of fort Pontchartrain<sup>14</sup> the lands have a mixture of sand, and that in the neighbouring forests there are bottoms almost constantly under water; however these very lands have produced wheat eighteen years successively without the least manure, and you have no great way to go to find the finest soil in the world. With respect to woods, without going a great way from the fort, I have seen as I have been walking such as may vie with our noblest forests.

[<sup>18</sup>] As for what has been said that by making a settlement at the Narrows, we should bring the fur-trade too much within reach of the English; there is not a man in Canada who does not agree, that we can never succeed in hindering the Indians from carrying them their commodities, let them be settled where they will, and with all the precautions we can possibly take; except by causing them to find the same advantage in trading with us, as in the province of New York. I have many more things to acquaint your Grace of, but these discussions would carry me too far; we shall talk over the matter some day at our leisure.

On the 7th of June, which was the day after my arrival at the fort, Mons. de Tonti who commands here,<sup>15</sup> assembled the chiefs of the three villages I have just mentioned, in order to communicate to them the orders he

<sup>14</sup>This was the fort built in 1701 by Antoine la Mothe Sieur de Cadillac, founder of the Detroit settlement. It was a palisaded log fort, containing a number of cabins. In 1761 it was turned over to the English, and in 1763 endured a protracted siege by the Indians under Pontiac. During the American Revolution it was replaced by Fort Lernoult.

<sup>15</sup>Alphonse de Tonti, brother of La Salle's companion Henri, was born in 1659 and became a lieutenant in the Canadian army. In 1701 he aided Cadillac to found Detroit; the wives of these two officers were the first white women in the West. Tonti was commandant at Detroit 1704-1705, 1717-27. He died November 10 of the latter year. See sketch in *Mich. Pion. and Hist. Colls.*, xxxiv, 313-316.

had received from the Marquis de Vaudreuil; they heard him calmly and without interruption; when he had done speaking the orator of the Hurons told him in few words, that they were going to consult about what he had proposed to them, and would give him their answer in a short time; it is the custom of the Indians never to give an immediate answer on an affair of any consequence. Two days after they assembled in great numbers at the commandant's, who was desirous that I should be present at this council, together with the officers of the garrison. Sasteratsi,<sup>16</sup> whom we French call king of the Hurons, and who is in fact hereditary chief of the Tionnontatez, who are the true Hurons, was also present on this occasion; but as he is still a minor he came only for form sake; his uncle who governs in his name, and who is called regent, spoke in quality of orator of the <sup>[9]</sup> nation; now the honour of speaking in the name of the whole is generally given to some Huron when any of them happens to be of the council. The first view of these assemblies gives you no great idea of the body; imagine to yourself, madam, half a score savages almost stark naked with their hair disposed in as many different manners as there are different persons in the assembly, and all of them equally ridiculous; some with laced hats, all with pipes in their mouths and with the most unthinking faces. It is besides a rare thing to hear any one utter so much as a single word in a quarter of an hour, or to hear any answer made even in a monosyllable; not the least mark of distinction, nor any respect paid to any person whatsoever. We should however be apt to change our opinion of them upon hearing the result of their deliberations.

<sup>16</sup>Sastaratsi was the hereditary title of the great chief of the Hurons. See *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, xvii, 279.



The business in debate on this occasion, related to two points which the governor general had very much at heart; the first was to persuade the three villages settled at the Narrows, to agree that no more brandy should be sold them, which had been expressly prohibited by the council of the marine.<sup>17</sup> The second was to engage all the nations to unite with the French, to destroy the Outagamies, commonly called Foxes, who had been favoured with an amnesty some years before, and who had begun their robberies anew.<sup>18</sup> Monsieur de Tonti first caused to be repeated to them by his interpreters in a few words, what he explained more at large in the first assembly, when the Huron orator made answer in the name of the three villages; he made no exordium but came at once to the point, he spoke a great while and with much gravity, pausing at each article to give time <sup>[10]</sup> to the interpreters to explain in French what he had been saying in his own language.

His mien, the tone of his voice, and the manner of his delivery, though without any gestures or inflections of the body, appeared to me extremely noble and calculated to persuade, and what he said must have been very eloquent since after being stript of all its ornaments in the mouth of the interpreter, who was only a man of common parts, we were all perfectly charmed with it; and I do assure you, madam, that had he continued to speak for two whole hours I could have heard him with the greatest pleasure. Another proof that the beauty of his discourse came not from the interpreter is, that this man never could

<sup>17</sup>The liquor traffic was the constant difficulty the government met in dealing with the Indians. The Council of the Marine was the French organ which controlled the colonies.

<sup>18</sup>On the Fox Wars see Louise P. Kellogg, "The Fox Indians during the French Régime," in Wisconsin Historical Society *Proceedings*, 1907, 142-188.

have dared to take upon him to tell us from himself all he said to us; I was even somewhat surprized at his boldness in repeating so faithfully as he did certain points which could not fail to be disagreeable to the commandant. When the Huron orator had ended, Onanguicé chief and orator of the Poutewatemies<sup>19</sup> spoke in a few words, and after a very ingenious manner, to all that the other had more largely expatiated upon, concluding to the same purpose, as he had done; the Outawais spoke not at all, but seemed to approve of what had been said by the others.

The result was that the French might use their pleasure with respect to the selling of brandy to the Indians; but they had done well had they never supplied them with any; and it is impossible to imagine any thing stronger than what the Huron orator said whilst he was laying open the disorders occasioned by this beverage, and the mischiefs it had done to all the Indian nations in general. The most zealous missionary could not have said more; he added however that they were now so much accustomed to it that they could no longer be without it; by which it was easy to guess that should the French refuse them, they would certainly have recourse to the English: that with respect to the war with the Outagamies nothing could be determined, except in a general council of all the nations who acknowledge Ononthio (so the Indians call the French king),<sup>20</sup> for their father; that no doubt they would all agree in thinking the war necessary, but that they would with great difficulty be brought to place

<sup>19</sup>Onanguissé was the title of a line of Potawatomi chieftains. See *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, xvi, 163-165, 168-169; xvii, 490.

<sup>20</sup>The term Onontio was first applied by the Indians to the second French governor of New France, Charles Hualt de Montmagny. Later it became the usual Indian name for the governor, and was extended to apply to the chief sovereign, the King.

any confidence in the French, who after having once before united them to assist in exterminating the common enemy, had granted them peace without ever consulting with their allies, and without its being possible to find out any reason for such a proceeding.<sup>21</sup>

The day after I visited the two Indian towns near the fort; I began with that of the Hurons where I found all the matrons, and amongst them the grand-mother of Sasteratsi in much affliction for being so long deprived of every spiritual succour; many circumstances which I learned at the same time confirmed me in the opinion I had before sometime adopted, that certain private interests were the sole obstacles to the desires of these good christians; it is to be hoped that the last orders of the council of the marine will remove all those obstacles; Monsieur de Tonti assured me he was going to set about it in an effectual manner.

Those who were my guides in this village assured me, that were it not for the Hurons the other Indians of the Narrows must die of hunger; <sup>[12]</sup> this is certainly not the fault of the land where they are settled; were they to cultivate it ever so little they would find at least sufficient for their subsistence; fishing alone would supply them with a good part, and this exercise is far from being very laborious, but after having once tasted brandy they think only of amassing of furs to purchase wherewithal to intoxicate themselves. The Hurons who are wiser, more laborious and more accustomed to husbandry, being also endued with a greater share of foresight entertain more solid thoughts, and by means of their industry are in a condition not only to subsist without being beholden to

<sup>21</sup>This refers to the peace arranged in 1716 by Louvigny with this tribe. *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, xvi, 341-344.



any one, but also to furnish a supply to their neighbours; this however is not done entirely from sentiments of humanity, for we must by no means reckon amongst the number of their good qualities that of disinterestedness.

I was still better received amongst the infidel Poutewatamies than amongst the christian Hurons; these Indians are the finest men in all Canada, and are besides of the sweetest natural temper, and have been always our very good friends. Onanguicé their chief treated me with a politeness which gave me full as high an opinion of his good sense as the discourse he had made in the council; he is a person of undoubted worth, and entirely in our interest.

As I was returning through a quarter of the Huron village, I perceived a number of these Indians, who seemed much heated at play; I approached them and found that the game they were playing at was what they call the game of the platter; this is the game to which the Indians are addicted above all others, they sometimes lose their rest, and in some degree their very <sup>[13]</sup> senses at it; they stake all they are worth, and several of them are known to continue at it till they have stript themselves stark naked and lost all their moveables in their cabbins; some have even been known to stake their liberty for a certain time; this circumstance proves beyond all doubt how passionately fond they are of it, there being no people in the universe more jealous of their liberty than our Indians.

The game of the platter or bones, is played between two persons only; each person has six or eight little bones, which I at first took for apricot stones, these being of the same size and shape; but upon viewing them nearer I found they had six unequal faces, the two largest of which are painted, the one black and the other of a straw colour; they

they fling them up into the air, striking at the same time against the ground or table with a round hollow dish, in which they are contained, and which must first be made to spin round; when they have no dish they content themselves with throwing the bones up into the air with the hand; if all of them after falling to the ground present the same colour, the player wins five points, the party is forty, and the points won are discounted in proportion to the gains on his side; five bones of a colour give only one point for the first time, but the second the winner sweeps the board; any lower number goes for nothing.

He who wins the party still continues to play; the loser yields his place to another who is named by the markers on the same side; for they take sides at the beginning of the game, so that a whole village is sometimes concerned in the party <sup>[14]</sup> and even sometimes one village plays against another; each side chuse their own marker who retires when he pleases, which happens only when things do not go so well on his side. At each throw that is played, especially if it be a decisive one, they make a prodigious shouting; the players seem possessed, and the spectators are scarce more masters of themselves; both make a thousand contorsions, address themselves to the bones, load the genii of the adverse party with imprecations, and the whole village rings with their howling; if all this is ineffectual to retrieve their ill-luck the losers are at liberty to put off the party till to-morrow, at the expence of a very slender repast to the assistants.

They then prepare to return to the combat, each invoking his tutelary genius and throwing in honour of him some tobacco into the fire; they implore of him above all things happy dreams: the moment day appears they fall to play, when if the losers take it into their head that the  
furniture

furniture of their cabbin is the cause of their ill-luck, they begin with changing it intirely; great parties generally last five or six days, and oftentimes the night occasions no interruption; however as all the spectators, at least such as are concerned in the game, are in such an agitation as to be transported out of themselves to such a degree that they quarrel and fight, which never happens to the Hurons except on these occasions, or when they are drunk; we may easily guess whether when the party is ended, both do not stand sufficiently in need of rest.

It happens sometimes that these parties at play are prescribed by some of their physicians, or at <sup>[15]</sup> the request of some sick person; a dream is often sufficient cause for either; this dream is always understood for a command of some genius, and then they prepare for the party with prodigious care; they assemble several different nights to make an essay, and to see who has the happiest hand at a throw; they consult their genius, they fast, and married persons observe the strictest continence and all to obtain a favourable dream; every morning they relate those they have had, and make a collection of all such things of which they happen to have dreamed, and which they imagine able to bring good luck for their side, which they put into little bags and carry about with them. If any one has the reputation of being fortunate, that is according to the notions of these people, of having a more fortunate genius, or one that is more inclined to do good, they never fail to make him approach him who holds the platter; they go sometimes to seek this person at a great distance, and if through old age or some infirmity he is unable to walk they carry him on their shoulders.

They have often pressed the missionaries to be present at these games, from a persuasion that their tutelar genii  
are

are more powerful than all others. It happened one day in a Huron village that a sick woman having caused one of their priests to be called, who are also their physicians, this quack prescribed for her the game of the platter, and appointed a village different from his own to play; she immediately sent to ask permission of the chief of this village; this was granted, the party was played and the game being ended, the patient returned the players a great many thanks for the cure, which as she <sup>[16]</sup> said they had procured her: so far however from being better she was on the contrary much worse, but they are obliged to seem satisfied even when they have least cause to be so.

The resentment of this woman and of her relations fell upon the missionaries for refusing to be present at the party, notwithstanding all the solicitations that had been made to them for this purpose, and from their chagrin at the little complaisance they shewed on this occasion, they reproached them with saying, that ever since their arrival in the country, the genii of the Indians had had no longer any power; the missionaries took advantage of this confession to shew these infidels the weakness of their divinities, and the superiority of the God of the christians; but as it seldom happens on such occasions that people are disposed to hear reason, these barbarians answered coolly, "You have your gods and we have ours, only it is our misfortune that ours are the least powerful of the two."

The Narrows is one of the countries where a botanist might make the greatest number of discoveries. I have already observed that all Canada produces a vast number of simples of sovereign virtue; it is not doubted that the snows contribute much to this, but there is in it besides such a variety of soil, which joined to the mildness of the  
climate,

climate, and the ease with which the sun warms this country which is more open than the rest, gives ground to believe that the plants have more virtue in this than in any other part of it.

[17] One of my guides lately made a trial of the virtue of an herb which is to be met with every where, and the knowledge of which is exceeding necessary to travellers, not for any good qualities it possesses, for I have never as yet heard any attributed to it, but because too much care cannot be taken to avoid it; this is called, *L'herbe a la puce*, or Flea-wort, but this name is not expressive enough to shew the effects it produces. These are more or less sensible according to the constitution of those it happens to touch; there are even some persons on whom it does not operate at all; but some persons merely by looking upon it are seized with a violent fever, which lasts more than fifteen days, and is accompanied with a very troublesome scab, attended with a prodigious itching all over the body; it operates on others only when they touch it, and then the patient appears as if entirely covered over with a leprosy: and some have been known to have had their hands quite spoiled with it. No remedy is as yet known for it but patience; after some time it goes entirely off.<sup>22</sup>

There grow also at the Narrows citron trees in the open fields, the fruit of which in shape and colour resemble those of Portugal, but they are smaller and of a disagreeable flavour; they are excellent candied.<sup>23</sup> The root of this tree is a mortal and most subtle poison, and at the same time a sovereign antidote against the bite of serpents. It must be bruised and applied instantly on the wound: this remedy is immediate and infallible. On both sides of the

<sup>22</sup>The poison ivy (*Rhus toxicodendron*).

<sup>23</sup>Probably the may apple (*Podophyllum peltatum*).



Narrows the country is said to preserve all its beauty for ten leagues up the country; after which you meet with a smaller number of fruit trees and fewer meadows. But <sup>[18]</sup> after travelling five or six leagues farther inclining to lake Erie, towards the south-west, you discover immense meadows extending above a hundred leagues every way, and which feed an immense quantity of those buffaloes, whereof I have more than once made mention.

*I am, &c.*

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## LETTER EIGHTEENTH.

*Some Particulars relating to the Character, Customs, and Government of the Indians.*

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THE NARROWS, June 14, 1721

MADAM,

**A**FTER I had closed my last letter and given it to a person who was going down to Quebec, I made myself ready to pursue my voyage, and accordingly embarked next day; but I have not been able to get over, and through the neglect of those who conducted me, am returned back to fort Pontchartrain, where I very much fear being obliged to remain several days longer. These are disappointments we must lay our account with, in travelling with Canadians who are never in a hurry, and who are very careless in taking their measures. But, as we are to make the most of every thing, I will take the opportunity of this delay, to divert you with beginning some account of the government of the Indians, and their manner of proceeding in the dispatch of public business: by this means, you will more easily understand many things, which I shall have occasion to mention to you in the sequel.

[20] I shall, however, be as brief as possible on this head: first, because every thing relating to it is not equally interesting

teresting; in the second place, because I would not willingly write you any thing, but what is supported on the credit of good witnesses; and it is no easy matter to find people whose sincerity is beyond all suspicion, at least of exaggerating things; or who cannot be accused of having too slightly believed what has been told them; or lastly, who have judgment sufficient to take things in their true point of view; which requires one to have made a long stay in the country, and to have conversed much with the inhabitants. I shall therefore give you nothing of my own on this article; for which cause, I shall not observe any exact order, in what I shall say; but you will easily collect together, and make a just whole of the passages I shall give you in my letters, in proportion as I shall be informed of them.

It must be agreed, Madam, that the nearer we view our Indians, the more good qualities we discover in them: most of the principles which serve to regulate their conduct, the general maxims by which they govern themselves, and the essential part of their character, discover nothing of the barbarian. Besides those ideas, though wholly indistinct, which they still preserve of a Supreme Being, these vestiges, now almost nearly effaced, of a religious worship, which they seem formerly to have paid this sovereign ruler; and the weak traces which we remark in their most indifferent actions of the ancient belief, and of the primitive religion, might restore them more easily than is imagined to the true path, render their conversion to christianity easier than is commonly found, and which is attended with greater obstacles, even in the most civilized <sup>[22]</sup> nations. In effect, does not experience teach us, that politeness, knowledge, and the maxims of state, produce in these last an attachment to, and prejudice in favour



vour of their false tenets; that all the zeal and abilities of the evangelical labourers, can with difficulty surmount them; and that grace must of necessity act more powerfully on the minds of enlightened infidels, who are almost always blinded by their presumption, than on those who oppose to it their narrow capacities only.

Most part of the people on this continent have a sort of Aristocratical government, the form of which is extremely various: for though each town has a chief of its own, independent of all the rest of the same nation, and whose subjects are dependent on him in very few particulars; there is, notwithstanding, no affair of any consequence resolved upon, but by the advice of the Elders. Towards Acadia the *Sagamos* were more absolute, and it does not appear that they were under any obligation, as the chiefs are almost every where else, of making largesses to their subjects; on the contrary, they exacted a kind of tribute from them; and disinterestedness was by no means esteemed a royal virtue amongst them. But it seems the dispersion of these Acadian Indians, and perhaps too their commerce with the French, have introduced considerable changes into their ancient form of government; whereof Lescarbot and Champlain are the only authors, who have given us any particular account.

Several nations have each of them three principal families or tribes, which seem to be as old as their first origin. They have all, however, one common stock; and there is one at least that is <sup>[22]</sup> looked upon as the first, and which has a sort of pre-eminence over the other two, in which those of this tribe are treated as brothers, whereas amongst themselves they treat one another as cousins. These tribes are mixed, without being confounded, each of them having a distinct chief in every village: and in such affairs as  
concern

concern the whole nation, these chiefs assemble to deliberate upon it. Every tribe bears the name of some animal, the whole nation having also its own, whose name it takes and whose figure is their bearing or ensigns armorial; and when they sign any treaties, it is always by drawing those figures upon them, except when for particular reasons they substitute some other.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the Huron nation is the nation of the porcupine: its first tribe bears the name of the bear, or of the roebuck, authors varying on this head; the other two have the wolf and tortoise for their animals; lastly, every town has its own particular animal, and it is probably this variety which has misled the authors of some accounts. It is also proper to observe, that besides these distinctions of nations, tribes, and towns, by animals, there are also others founded on some custom, or particular event: as for instance, the Tionnontatez Hurons, who are of the first tribe, commonly call themselves the tobacco nation; and we have a treaty in which these Indians, who were then settled at Michillimakinac, have put for their mark the figure of a beaver.

The Iroquois nation has the same animals with the Huron, of which it appears to be a colony, with this difference, that the family of the tortoise is split into two branches, called the great and little tor-<sup>[23]</sup>toise. The chief of each family bears its name; and in all public deeds he is known by no other. The same thing happens with regard to the chief of a nation, as well as of every village: but besides this name, which is only a sort of representative appellation, they have another, which distinguishes

<sup>1</sup> Charlevoix is here explaining the external features of totemism. To the French mind these Indian totems bore a character similar to heraldry. See document in *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, xvii, 245-252. Note also the totemic signatures in *ibid.*, xv, 2-6.

them

them more particularly, and which is properly a mark of dignity: thus, one is called the most noble, another the most ancient, and so forth. Lastly, they have a third which is personal; but I should be apt to believe, that this custom prevails only amongst those nations where the office of chief is hereditary.

These titles are always imposed with great ceremony; the new chief, or, in case he is too young, he who represents him, is to make a feast, bestow presents, pronounce the eulogium of their predecessor, and sing his song. There are, however, some personal names in so much veneration that no one dares to appropriate them to himself; or which are at least a long time before they are renewed; when this is done, it is called raising the person to life who formerly bore it.

In the northern parts, and wherever the Algonquin tongue prevails, the dignity of chief is elective; and the whole ceremony of election and installation consists in some feasts, accompanied with dances and songs: the chief elect likewise never fails to make the panegyrick of his predecessor, and to invoke his genius. Amongst the Hurons, where this dignity is hereditary, the succession is continued through the women, so that at the death of a chief, it is not his own, but his sister's son who succeeds him; or, in default of which, his nearest relation in the female line. When the whole <sup>[24]</sup> branch happens to be extinct, the noblest matron of the tribe or in the nation chuses the person she approves of most, and declares him chief. The person who is to govern must be come to years of maturity; and when the hereditary chief is not as yet arrived at this period, they appoint a regent, who has all the authority, but which he holds in name of the minor. These chiefs generally have no great marks of outward respect

respect paid them, and if they are never disobeyed, it is because they know how to set bounds to their authority. It is true that they request or propose, rather than command; and never exceed the boundaries of that small share of authority with which they are vested. Thus it is properly reason which governs, and the government has so much the more influence, as obedience is founded in liberty; and that they are free from any apprehension of its degenerating into tyranny.

Nay more, each family has a right to chuse a counsellor of its own, and an assistant to the chief, who is to watch for their interest; and without whose consent the chief can undertake nothing. These counsellors are, above all things, to have an eye to the public treasury; and it is properly they who determine the uses it is to be put to. They are invested with this character in a general council, but they do not acquaint their allies with it, as they do at the elections and installations of their chief. Amongst the Huron nations, the women name the counsellors, and often chuse persons of their own sex.

This body of counsellors or assistants is the highest of all; the next is that of the elders, consisting of all those who have come to the years of maturity. I have not been able to find exactly <sup>[25]</sup> what this age is. The last of all is that of the warriors; this comprehends all who are able to bear arms. This body has often at its head, the chief of the nation or town; but he must first have distinguished himself by some signal action of bravery; if not, he is obliged to serve as a subaltern, that is, as a single centinel; there being no degrees in the militia of the Indians.

In fact, a large body may have several chiefs, this title being given to all who ever commanded; but they are not therefore the less subject to him who leads the party; a  
kind

kind of general, without character or real authority, who has power neither to reward nor punish, whom his soldiers are at liberty to abandon at pleasure and with impunity, and whose orders notwithstanding are scarce ever disputed: so true it is, that amongst a people who are guided by reason, and inspired with sentiments of honour and love for their country, independence is not destructive of subordination; and, that a free and voluntary obedience is that on which we can always rely with the greatest certainty. Moreover, the qualities requisite are, that he be fortunate, of undoubted courage, and perfectly disinterested. It is no miracle, that a person possessed of such eminent qualities should be obeyed.

The women have the chief authority amongst all the nations of the Huron language; if we except the Iroquois canton of Onneyouth, in which it is in both sexes alternately. But if this be their lawful constitution, their practice is seldom agreeable to it. In fact, the men never tell the women any thing they would have to be kept secret; and rarely any affair of consequence is com-<sup>[26]</sup> muni-  
cated to them, though all is done in their name, and the chiefs are no more than their lieutenants. What I have told your Grace of the grandmother of the hereditary chief of the Hurons of the Narrows, who could never obtain a missionary for her own town, is a convincing proof that the real authority of the women is very small: I have been however assured, that they always deliberate first on whatever is proposed in council; and that they afterwards give the result of their deliberation to the chiefs, who make the report of it to the general council, composed of the elders; but in all probability this is done only for form's sake, and with the restrictions I have already mentioned. The warriors likewise consult together, on  
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what relates to their particular province, but can conclude nothing of importance which concerns the nation or town; all being subject to the examination and controul of the council of elders, who judge in the last resource.

It must be acknowledged, that proceedings are carried on in these assemblies with a wisdom and a coolness, and a knowledge of affairs, and I may add generally with a probity, which would have done honour to the areopagus of Athens, or to the senate of Rome, in the most glorious days of those republics: the reason of this is, that nothing is resolved upon with precipitation; and that those violent passions, which have so much disgraced the politics even of Christians, have never prevailed amongst the Indians over the public good. Interested persons fail not, however, to set many springs in motion, and apply an address in the execution of their designs, we could hardly believe barbarians capable of; they also all of them possess, in the most sovereign degree, the art of concealing their real intentions: but generally speaking, the glory of the nation and motive of honour, are the chief movers in all enterprizes. What can never be excused in them is, that they often make honour consist in satiating a revenge which knows no bounds; a fault which Christianity alone is able to correct, and in which all our politeness and religion are often unsuccessful.

Each tribe has an orator in every town, which orators are the only persons who have a liberty to speak in the public councils and general assemblies: they always speak well and to the purpose. Besides this natural eloquence, and which none who are acquainted with them will dispute, they have a perfect knowledge of the interests of their employers, and an address in placing the best side of their own cause in the most advantageous light, which  
nothing

nothing can exceed. On some occasions, the women have an orator, who speaks in their name, or rather acts as their interpreter.

Nations who may be said to possess nothing, neither public nor private, and who have no ambition to extend their territory, should, in appearance, have few affairs to settle with one another. But the mind of man, naturally restless, is incapable of remaining inactive, and is very sagacious in cutting out business for itself. What is certain, is, that our Indians are eternally negotiating, and have always some affairs or other on the tapis: such as the concluding or renewing of treaties, offers of service, mutual civilities, making alliances, invitations to become parties in a war, and lastly, compliments of condolance on the death of some chief or considerable person. All this is perform-<sup>[28]</sup> ed with a dignity, an attention, and, I may add, with a capacity equal to the most important affairs; and theirs are sometimes of greater consequence than they seem to be: for those, who are deputed for this purpose, have commonly secret instructions; so that the outward motive of their deputation is no more than a veil which covers their real designs.

The nation, which has made the first figure in Canada, for two centuries past, is that of the Iroquois: their success in war has given them a superiority over most of the others, which none of them are, any longer, in a condition to dispute with them; and from being pacifick, which they formerly were, they have become very troublesome and pragmatikal. But nothing has contributed more to render them formidable, than the advantage of their situation, which they presently discovered; and whereof they have made all possible advantage. As they were situated between us and the English, they soon found that both  
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would be under the necessity of keeping well with them; and, indeed, it has been the chief care of both colonies, since their establishment, to gain them over to their own party, or, at least, to persuade them to stand neuter: and as they were persuaded that if either of these nations should entirely get the ascendant over the other, they must soon be subjected themselves; they have found the secret of ballancing their success; and if we reflect that their whole force united has never exceeded five or six thousand combatants, and that it is a great while since they have diminished more than one half, we must needs allow, they must have used infinite abilities and address.

[29] With respect to particulars and the interior government or police of towns, affairs are reduced to few articles, and are soon concluded. The authority of the chief seldom or never extends to these; and, generally speaking, persons in any degree of credit, are entirely taken up about the public business. A single affair of however little importance, is long under deliberation; every thing being conducted with much coolness and phlegm, and nothing being decided till all who are desirous have been acquainted with it. If a present has been given underhand to any of the elders, to make sure of his suffrage, you are sure to obtain it, if the present has been accepted of. It has scarce ever been known, that an Indian has failed in an engagement of this sort; but it is no easy matter to bring them to accept of it, nor does he ever receive with both hands. Young persons enter early into the knowledge of affairs, which naturally renders them grave and ripe, at an age in which we are still children; this interests them, from their tenderest infancy, in the public weal, and inspires them with an emulation which is fomented with great care, and from which there is nothing that might not be hoped for.

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The greatest defect in this government is, that they have scarce the shadow of criminal justice among them; though, to say truth, it is far from being attended with the same bad effects it would certainly be amongst us: the great spring of our passions, and the chief source of those disorders which are the most pernicious to civil society, to wit, private interest, having scarce any power over men who never think of hoarding, and give themselves very little concern about to-morrow.

[30] We may also justly reproach them with the way in which they bring up their children: they do not so much as know what it is to correct them. Whilst they are little, they say they have no reason; and it never enters into the head of an Indian, to think that the judgment is improved by punishment; when they are come to years of discretion, they pretend to be masters of their own actions, and therefore accountable to none. They carry these maxims to such a height, as to suffer themselves to be maltreated by intoxicated persons, without so much as defending themselves for fear of hurting them. Why should we do them any evil, say they, when you talk to them of the ridiculousness of this behaviour; they know not what they do?

In a word, these Indians are perfectly convinced, that man is born free, and that no power on earth has a right to infringe his liberty, and that nothing can compensate the loss of it: and it has been found a very difficult matter to undeceive even the Christians among them, and to make them understand how, by a natural consequence of the corruption of our nature, which is the effect of sin, an unbridled liberty of doing mischief differs very little from obliging them to commit it, because of the strength of the byass which draws us to it; and that the law which restrains

strains us, causes us to approach nearer to our original state of liberty, whilst it appears to take it from us. Happy for them, experience has not made them feel in many things all the power of this tendency which produces so many crimes elsewhere. Their understandings being narrower than ours, their desires are still more so: reduced to desire what is necessary only, for which providence has sufficiently provided, they <sup>[31]</sup> have scarce so much as the notion of superfluities.

After all this, toleration and impunity is a very great disorder; as is also that want of subordination in public as well as domestic life, in which every one does what seems good in his own eyes; where father, mother, and children often live, like so many persons who have met by chance, and linked together by no sort of tie; where young persons manage the affairs of the family, without consulting their parents about them any more than if they were mere strangers; where the children are brought up in absolute independence, and where they are early accustomed to listen neither to the voice of nature, nor to the most indispensable duties of society.

If in those nations who are governed with more wisdom, and who are restrained by the bridle of a holy religion, we notwithstanding sometimes see such monsters as dishonour humanity, they at least excite the horror of others, and expose themselves to the lash of the law; but what is in this case the crime of an individual, becomes the crime of the nation, when it is suffered to go unpunished, as parricide itself is amongst the Indians; and were it still more rare than it is, this impunity, however, is such a stain as nothing can efface, and which savours entirely of the barbarian. There are, however, in all this some exceptions, of which I shall presently speak; but, generally speaking,  
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the genius and character of our Indians is such as I have been describing it.

They are not only persuaded, that a person who is not in possession of his reason is not responsible <sup>[32]</sup> for his actions, at least, that he deserves no punishment; but they imagine likewise that it is beneath the dignity of a man to defend himself against a woman or a child: provided, however, as I should be apt to imagine, that there is no danger of life being lost, or any risque of being maimed; in which case, their way is, if possible, to save themselves by flight. But, should an Indian kill another in his cabin, being drunk, which they often pretend to be when they harbour any such designs, they content themselves with bewailing the dead: It was a great misfortune, say they, but as for the murderer he knew not what he did.

If the thing was done in cold blood, they suppose without difficulty that the person who committed it, must have had very good reasons before he proceeded to this extremity. If it is clear he had none, it belongs to those of his own cabin, as being the only persons concerned, to punish him; these have power to punish him with death, but this they rarely do, and even then without any form of justice, so that his death does not so much look like a legal punishment as the revenge of some individual; and sometimes a chief is glad of this opportunity to get rid of a bad subject. In a word, crimes are punished in such a manner as neither to satisfy justice nor establish the public tranquillity and security.

A murder, in which several cabins should be affected, would notwithstanding always have troublesome consequences, and would often be sufficient to set a whole town and even a whole nation in a combustion: for which reason, in such accidents the council of the elders leave nothing

ing undone in order to accommodate matters timeously; <sup>[33]</sup> and in case of success it is commonly the publick who makes the presents, and takes all the necessary steps with the offended family. The prompt punishment of the criminal would at once put an end to the affair, and the relations of the deceased are at liberty to do their pleasure on him, if they can get him in their hands; but his own cabin think it inconsistent with their honour to sacrifice him, and often the village do not think proper to compel them to it.

I have read in a letter of Father Brebeuf,<sup>2</sup> who lived a long time among the Hurons, that these Indians were wont to punish murderers in this manner. They extended the dead body on poles fixed to the roof of a cabbin, and the murderer was obliged to sit several days successively directly under it, and to receive all that fell from the carcass, not only on himself but also on his provisions, which were placed near him, except by means of some considerable present made to the cabbin of the defunct, he obtained the privilege of saving his diet from the pollution of his poison;<sup>3</sup> but the Missionary does not tell us whether this was done by publick authority, or was only by way of reprisal, which those it concerned made use of after getting the assassin in their power.

Be this as it will, the way most in use amongst all the Indians to indemnify the relations of a man who has been murdered, is to replace him by means of a prisoner of war: in this case the captive is almost always adopted, enters into possession of all the rights of the deceased, and soon

<sup>2</sup> Jean de Brébeuf, born in Normandy in 1593, was one of the first Jesuits in Canada, coming there in 1625. In 1626 he visited the Hurons and in 1633 became their permanent missionary. During the Iroquois invasion in 1649 Father Brébeuf was captured by the enemy and tortured to death.

<sup>3</sup> For this incident see *Jesuit Relations*, x, 221-223.



causes the person whose place he fills to be forgotten. There are, however, certain odious crimes <sup>[34]</sup> which are punished with death on the spot, at least among some nations; such as witchcraft.

Whosoever is suspected of this crime can never be safe any where; they even cause him to undergo, when they can lay hold on him, a kind of rack, in order to oblige him to name his accomplices, after which he is condemned to the same punishment with the prisoners of war; but they first ask the consent of his family, which they dare not refuse. Those who are least criminal are knocked in the head, before they are burned: those who dishonour their families, are treated much in the same manner, and it is generally their own family that does justice upon them.

Amongst the Hurons who are very much given to thieving, and who perform it with a dexterity which would do honour to our most expert pick-pockets, it was lawful, on discovery of the thief, not only to take from him what he had stolen, but also to carry off everything in his cabin, and to strip himself, his wife, and children stark naked without their daring to make the least resistance. And further in order to shun all such contestation which might arise on this head, certain points were agreed upon from which they never deviated. For example, every thing found, were it but a moment after it was lost, belonged to the finder, provided the former proprietor had not before reclaimed it; but on discovery of the least dishonesty on the part of the former, they obliged him to make restitution, which occasioned sometimes dissensions, which were with difficulty put an end to: the following is an instance of this sort singular enough.

<sup>[35]</sup> A good old woman had for all her worldly goods, but one collar of Wampum, worth about ten crowns of  
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our money, and which she carried about with her every where in a little bag. One day as she was at work in the fields, she chanced to hang her bag on a tree; another woman who perceived it and had a great desire to filch her collar from her, thought the present a favourable occasion for seizing it, without being liable to be accused of theft: she therefore kept her eye continually upon it; and, in about the space of an hour or two, the old woman having gone into the next field, she flies to the tree, seizes the bag, and falls a crying how lucky she had been to find so valuable a prize. The old woman turns immediately about and says the bag belonged to her, and that it was she who had hung it on the tree, that she had neither lost it nor forgot it, and that she intended to take it down, when her work should be over; her adversary made answer, that we are not to judge the intentions, and that having quitted the field without taking down her bag, she was deemed in law to have forgot it.

After many contestations between these two women, who never spoke so much as one disobliging word the whole time, the affair was brought before an arbiter who was the chief of the village: "according to the rigor," says he, "the bag is the property of the finder; but the circumstances of the thing are such, that if this woman "would not be taxed with avarice, she ought to restore it "to the claimant, and be satisfied with some little present, "which the other cannot in reason refuse her." Both parties acquiesced in this judgment; and it is pro-<sup>[36]</sup> per to observe that the fear of being accused of avarice had full as much power on the minds of the Indians, as the fear of punishment could have had; and that these people are generally governed by the principles of honour more than by any other motive whatever.

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What I am now going to add, will give your Grace a new proof of this. I said a little above, that in order to prevent the consequences of a murder, the public takes upon itself the charge of making the proper submissions for the guilty, and indemnifying the interested. Would you believe that this very circumstance has more power in preventing these disorders than the most severe laws? nothing is, however, more true: for as these satisfactions cost much to men whose haughtiness is beyond all expression, the criminal is the more sensible of the mortification which he sees the publick suffers on his account, than he could possibly be of his own; and their zeal for the honour of their nation, is a much more powerful curb on these barbarians than the fear of death, or any other punishment whatsoever.

Besides, it is certain that impunity has not always prevailed amongst them to the degree it has done lately; and our first missionaries found some traces of the ancient severity, with which they knew how to restrain crimes still remaining. Theft in particular has always been looked upon as a stain which dishonoured a family; and every individual had a right to wash off the scandal of it in the blood of the criminal. Father Brebeuf perceived one day a young Huron who was dispatching a girl; he ran up to him in order to hinder him, <sup>[37]</sup> and asked him what it was that could provoke him to this violence. "It is my "sister," answered the Indian, "she is a thief, and I am "going to expiate by her death, the dishonour she has "brought upon me and all our family." My letter is just called for. I conclude with assuring you, that

*I am, &c.*



## LETTER NINETEENTH.

*Voyage from the Narrows to Michillimakinac. Description of the country. Of the marriages of the Indians.*

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MICHILLIMAKINAC, June 30, 1721.

M A D A M ,

IT was on the 18th of this month I at length took my leave for good and all of fort Pontchartrain at the Narrows, a little before sunset. I had scarce advanced a league in my way before a storm accompanied with a deluge of rain, obliged me to make to land well soaked, where we passed the night in a very uncomfortable manner. All I was able to get forward the next day was to traverse lake *St. Claire*, which is about four leagues long; the country appeared to me very good on both sides. At half way you leave on your left a river 120 feet in breadth at its mouth; this has got the name of the river of the Hurons, these Indians having taken sanctuary here during the war with the Iroquois. On the right and almost opposite is another river, the mouth of which is twice as wide, and which is navigable for four-score leagues without any rapid current, a rare thing in the rivers of this country: they could not tell me its name.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Not the present Huron River of Michigan; this must be either the Clinton River or some arm of the lake the traveler mistook for a stream. The river at the right was the Thames.

The

[ 40 ] The course from the fort at the Narrows to the end of this traverse is east, north-east; from thence you turn to the north by way of the east, and so round till you come to the south for four leagues, at the end of which you find on your right a village of the Missisaguy Indians, seated on a fertile soil at the entry of three magnificent meadows, and in the most charming situation that can be;<sup>2</sup> from thence to lake Huron I reckon twelve leagues, the country continuing always most delightful. This is a noble channel as straight as a line and bordered with lofty forests, interspersed with fine meadows with many islands scattered up and down in it, some of which are considerably large; the course through it is always north one quarter east, and in the entrance of lake Huron the course is due north for twelve leagues more.

Crossing lake *St. Claire*, I had in my canoe a young Indian who was strong and vigorous, and on the strength of whose arms I relied a good deal, when I granted him his passage on his asking it; he was however of very little service to me, to make amends he diverted me highly till a storm that came on just over our heads begun to make me uneasy. This young man fell a dressing himself before he embarked, and at every three strokes of his oar, took up his looking glass to see whether the motion of his arms had discomposed the œconomy of his dress, or whether the sweat had not changed the disposition of the red and other colours with which he had daubed his face.

I dont know whether he expected to arrive at the village of the Missisaguys before night, in order to be present at some feast; but we were not able to get so far. The storm increased as we were [ 41 ] almost close to an island

<sup>2</sup>The Mississauga village was on the eastern bank of St. Claire River in what is now Lambton County, Ontario.

situated

situated at the end of the lake, where we were obliged to stop. Our young Indian seemed not much mortified at the disappointment, these people seldom taking any thing of that sort much to heart; perhaps he had no other intention in dressing himself than the vanity of being admired by us; but if this was his design, all his care was labour in vain, as I had seen him in his own likeness but two days before, when I thought he looked much better than with all that ridiculous dawbing that had cost him so much trouble; few of the women here paint their faces, but all the men, and especially the young fellows are mighty fond of this decking, there are some of them who will spend half a day in dawbing themselves in this manner, only that they may have the pleasure of strolling from door to door in order to be admired, and return afterwards extremely well satisfied with themselves, though not a word has been spoke to them.

We entered lake Huron the 21st about ten o'clock in the forenoon, where we had soon the pleasure of fishing for sturgeon. On the morrow in spite of the thunder which rumbled the whole day, but which was satisfied with threatening us; I advanced near twenty-five leagues in the lake, but the 23d a thick fog, which hindered us from seeing four paces before our canoe, obliged us to shorten sail, because we were sailing on a ledge of rocks, which in many places has scarce half a foot water on it; this rock extends a great way into the lake and is ten leagues in length; our Canadians call it the low countries. The day following we made the bay of Saguinam, five or six leagues broad at the mouth and thirty deep;<sup>3</sup> from thence to Michillimakinac the prospect is extremely dis- <sup>[42]</sup>agreeable, no more vines, straggling shrubby woods, and

<sup>3</sup> The modern Saginaw Bay.

very little game. Ten leagues beyond the bay of Saguinam you perceive two very large rivers, a league distant from each other, and four or five leagues farther a creek called, *Anse au Tonnerre*, or *Thunder Creek*, three leagues over at the mouth, but of no great depth within land.<sup>4</sup> Michillimakinac lies in 43 deg. and 30 min. north lat.<sup>5</sup> and the course which is thirty leagues long from the mouth of the Narrows, coasting along the western shore of lake Huron is almost due north. I arrived the 28th in this post which is much fallen to decay, since the time that Monsieur de la Motte Cadillac<sup>6</sup> carried to the Narrows the best part of the Indians who were settled here, and especially the Hurons; several of the Outawaies followed them thither, others dispersed themselves amongst the beaver islands, so that what is left is only a sorry village, where there is notwithstanding still carried on a considerable fur-trade, this being a thoroughfare or rendezvous of a number of Indian nations.

The fort<sup>7</sup> is still kept up as well as the house of the missionaries, who at present are not distressed with business, having never found the Outawaies much disposed to receive their instructions, but the court judges their presence necessary in a place where we are often obliged to treat with our allies, in order to exercise their functions on the

<sup>4</sup>Still called Thunder Bay and Thunder Bay River.

<sup>5</sup>Charlevoix's latitude is two degrees too low; Mackinac being more than 45° 30'.

<sup>6</sup>Antoine la Mothe Sieur de Cadillac settled first in Acadia; from 1694 to 1697 he was commandant at Mackinac, when he conceived the plan of a settlement at Detroit. This was achieved in 1701 and the Indians of Mackinac attracted thither. After governing Detroit for ten years he was removed to the governorship of Louisiana, where he remained until 1715. He died in France, October 18, 1730.

<sup>7</sup>The fort at Mackinac was, in Charlevoix's time, on the south side of the straits at the place now known as Old Mackinaw. After the abandonment of St. Ignace, at the close of the seventeenth century, the settlement was begun on the south shore, which was the Mackinac post until in 1781, when the fort and mission were removed to the island.

French, who repair hither in great numbers.<sup>8</sup> I have been assured that since the settlement of the Narrows, and the dispersion of the Indians which has followed upon it, several northern nations that were wont to bring their Furs to this place, have since found the way to Hudson's bay by the river Bourbon where they trade with the English; but Mon-<sup>[43]</sup> sieur de la Motte could not foresee this inconvenience as we were then in possession of Hudson's bay.

The situation of Michillimakinac is most advantageous for traffic. This post stands between three great lakes; lake Michigan which is three hundred leagues in circuit, without mentioning the great bay which falls into it; lake Huron which is three hundred and fifty leagues in circumference, and is in form of a triangle; and lake Superior, which is five hundred leagues round; all three are navigable for the largest sort of boats, and the two first are separated only by a small strait, which has also water sufficient for the same vessels, which may also without any obstacle sail all over lake Erie as far as Niagara. It is true that there is no communication between lake Huron and lake Superior, but by a channel two and twenty leagues long, and very much incommoded with rapid currents, which do not hinder canoes from going to Michillimakinac, loaded with all the commodities which lake Superior and its shores afford.

This lake is two hundred leagues in length from east to west, and in several places fourscore leagues broad from

<sup>8</sup>Father Joseph Marest was superior at Mackinac at the time of Charlevoix's visit. At this time he was quite aged, having come West in 1689 and visited the Sioux. By 1700 he was stationed at Mackinac where he remained until 1722, whence he was recalled to Montreal. He died at this latter place in October, 1725. See *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, xvi, 205. His companion was Father Michel Guignas, born in 1681, who came to Canada in 1716. The next year he was sent to Mackinac, where he remained ten years. In 1727 he founded a mission to the Sioux. Guignas was in the West until 1739; he died in 1752 at Quebec.



north to south; the whole south coast is sandy and pretty streight; it would be dangerous to be surprized by a north wind on it, and the north shore is much more commodious for navigation, it being entirely lined with rocks, which form little harbours, where you may shelter yourself with the greatest ease; and nothing is more necessary to those who sail in canoes on this lake, in which travellers have remarked a phenomenon which is singular enough.

[44] When a storm is about to rise you are advertised of it, say they, two days before; at first you perceive a gentle murmuring on the surface of the water which lasts the whole day, without encreasing in any sensible manner; the day after the lake is covered with pretty large waves, but without breaking all that day, so that you may proceed without fear, and even make good way if the wind is favourable; but on the third day when you are least thinking of it the lake becomes all on fire; the ocean in its greatest rage is not more tost, in which case you must take care to be near shelter to save yourself; this you are always sure to find on the north shore, whereas on the south you are obliged to secure yourself the second day at a considerable distance from the water side.

The Indians out of gratitude for the plenty of fish with which this lake supplies them, and from the respect which its vast extent inspires them with, have made a sort of divinity of it, to which they offer sacrifices after their own manner. I am however of opinion, that it is not to the lake itself but to the genius that presides over it, that they address their vows. If we may credit these people this lake proceeds from a divine original, and was formed by Michabou god of the waters, in order to catch beavers.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup>Michabou, or more commonly Nanabozho, was the mythical creator of the Algonquian cosmology. He is sometimes spoken of as the Great Hare.

In the channel by which it discharges itself into lake Huron, is a rapid current caused by two great rocks; our missionaries who have a very flourishing church here have called it, *Le sault de Sainte Marie*, or the Fall of St. Mary:<sup>10</sup> these rocks, according to the tradition of the Indians, are the remains of a causeway made by the god in order to dam up the waters of the rivers, and those of the lake *Alimipegon* which supply this great lake.<sup>11</sup>

[45] Large pieces of copper are found in some places on its banks and round some of the islands, which are still the object of a superstitious worship amongst the Indians; they look upon them with veneration, as if they were the presents of those gods who dwell under the waters; they collect their smallest fragments which they carefully preserve without however making any use of them.<sup>12</sup> They say that formerly a huge rock of this metal was to be seen elevated to a considerable height above the surface of the water, and as it has now disappeared they pretend that the gods have carried it elsewhere; but there is great reason to believe that in process of time, the waves of the lake have covered it entirely with sand and slime; and it is certain that in several places pretty large quantities of this metal have been discovered, without even being obliged to dig very deep. During the course of my first voyage to this country, I was acquainted with one of our order, who had been formerly a goldsmith, and who,

<sup>10</sup>The first white visitors to Sault Ste. Marie, whose narrative is extant, were Fathers Raymbault and Jogues, who came there in 1641 and gave the name to this place. See Kellogg, *Early Narratives*, 19-25. The mission was begun by Father Allouez in 1668. Father Marquette was stationed there for one winter. In 1674 the mission house was burned. Thereafter headquarters were removed to St. Ignace.

<sup>11</sup>Lake Nipigon, north of Lake Superior.

<sup>12</sup>The narrator is at fault here, for copper ornaments and utensils were much used by the prehistoric Indians. A large collection of these artifacts is in the Wisconsin Historical Museum.



while he was at the mission of the *Fall of St. Mary*, used to search for this metal, and made candlesticks, crosses, and censers of it, for this copper is often to be met with almost intirely pure.

When Michabou, add the Indians, formed lake Superior he dwelt at Michillimakinac the place of his birth; this name properly belongs to an island almost round and very high, situated at the extremity of lake Huron, though custom has extended it to all the country round about. This island may be about three or four miles in circumference, and is seen at the distance of twelve leagues. There are two other islands to the south; the most distant of which is five or six leagues long; the other is very small and quite round;<sup>13</sup> [46] both of them are well wooded and the soil excellent, whereas that of Michillimakinac is only a barren rock, being scarce so much as covered with moss or herbage; it is notwithstanding one of the most celebrated places in all Canada, and has been a long time according to some ancient traditions among the Indians, the chief residence of a nation of the same name, and whereof they reckoned as they say to the number of thirty towns, which were dispersed up and down in the neighbourhood of the island. It is pretended they were destroyed by the Iroquois, but it is not said at what time nor on what occasion; what is certain is, that no vestige of them now remains; I have somewhere read that our ancient missionaries have lately discovered some relicks of them. The name of Michillimakinac signifies a great quantity of turtles, but I have never heard that more of them are found here at this day than elsewhere.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup>The three islands are Mackinac, Bois Blanc, and Round Island in the Straits of Mackinac. For an early map of this region see *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, xvi, 136.

<sup>14</sup>The significance of Michilimackinac as usually given is the great turtle, from the island's shape.

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The Michillimakinacs live entirely by fishing, and there is perhaps no place in the world where they are in greater plenty; the most common sorts of fish in the three lakes, and in the rivers which discharge themselves into them, are the herring, the carp, the gilt-fish,<sup>15</sup> the pike, the sturgeon, the astikamegue or white-fish, and especially the trout. There are three sorts of these last taken; amongst which is one of a monstrous size, and in so great quantities, that an Indian with his sword will strike to the number of fifty sometimes in the space of three hours: but the most famous of all is the white-fish; it is nearly of the size and figure of a mackrel, and whether fresh or salted nothing of a fish-kind can exceed it. The Indians tell you that it was Michabou who taught their ancestors to fish, invented nets of which he took the idea from <sup>[ 47 ]</sup> Arachne's, or the spider's web. Those people, as your Grace very well sees, do their deity full as little honour as he deserves, by sending him to school to such a contemptible insect.

The prospect you enjoy from this place gives no very great idea of the fertility of the soil, tho' you find excellent land at no great distance. The same may be said of the Beaver islands, which you leave on your left soon after you have entered lake Michigan. The Outaways who retired thither sow maize on them, which good husbandry they have learned from the Hurons, with whom they have long dwelt in those parts. The Amikouys<sup>16</sup> had formerly their abode in these islands; this nation is now reduced to a very small number of families, who have gone over to the island Manitoualin, to the north of lake Huron; it is however one of the noblest in all Canada according to the Indians, who believe them descended from the great beaver

<sup>15</sup> Poisson doré, or yellow perch.

<sup>16</sup> For the Amikwi see *ante*, letter XI, vol. I, page 268, note 32.

whose

whose name they bear, and who is next to Michabou or the great hare, their principal deity.

He it is, say they likewise, who has formed lake Nipissing; and all the rapids or currents which are found in the great river of the Outaways, are the remains of the causeway he had built in order to compleat his design. They also add that he died in the same place, and that he is buried under a mountain which you perceive on the northern shore of lake Nipissing. This mountain viewed from one certain side, naturally enough represents the figure of a beaver, which circumstance has no doubt occasioned all these tales; but the Indians maintain that it was the great beaver who gave this form to the mountain, after he had <sup>[48]</sup> made choice of it for his burial-place, and they never pass by this place, without rendering him their homage, by offering him the smoke of their tobacco.

This, Madam, is what seemed worthy of observation with respect to this post, so celebrated in the voyages and relations of Canada. I now return to the manners and customs of the Indians, and having already treated of what relates to their wars, I shall entertain with what passes at their marriages.

A plurality of wives is allowed of, amongst several of the nations of the Algonquin language, and it is common enough to marry all the sisters; this custom is founded on a persuasion, that sisters must agree better together than strangers. In this case all the women are upon an equal footing; but amongst the true Algonquins there are two orders of wives, those of the second order being the slaves of the first. Some nations have wives in every quarter where they have occasion to sojourn for a while in hunting time; and I have been assured, that this abuse has crept in some time since, amongst the nations of the Huron

ron language, who were always before satisfied with one wife. But there prevails in the Iroquois canton of Tsonnonthouan a much greater disorder still, namely a plurality of husbands.

With respect to degrees of parentage in marriage, the Hurons and Iroquois are very scrupulous; the parties amongst them must have no manner of consanguinity, and even adoption itself is included in this law. But the husband when the wife happens to die first is obliged to marry her sister, or <sup>[49]</sup> in default of her, such person as the family of the deceased shall chuse for him. The wife on her part is under the same obligation with respect to the brothers or relations of her husband, provided he dies without leaving any children by her, and that she is still capable of having any. The reasons they alledge for this, are the same expressed in the 25th chapter of Deuteronomy. The husband who should refuse to marry the sister or relation of his departed wife, would thereby expose himself to all the outrages which the person he rejects shall think fit to offer him; and which he is obliged to suffer without murmuring: when for want of such person a widow is permitted to provide herself in a husband elsewhere, they are obliged to make her presents, as a testimony rendered to her virtuous behaviour; and which she has a right to exact, provided she have really observed a prudent deportment during the time of her first marriage.

Amongst all the Indian nations, there are certain considerable families, who can only contract alliances with each other, and chiefly amongst the Algonquins. Generally speaking, the perpetuity of marriages is sacred in this country, and most look upon those agreements to live together as long as they shall see fit, and to separate when they become weary of each other, as being contrary to  
good

good order. A husband who should abandon his wife without lawful cause, must lay his account with many insults from her relations; and a woman who should leave her husband without being forced to it by his ill conduct, must pass her time still worse.

Amongst the Miamis, a husband has a right to cut off the nose of the wife who elopes from him: <sup>[50]</sup> but amongst the Iroquois and Hurons they may part by mutual consent; this is done without any noise, and the parties thus separated are at liberty to enter into new engagements. These Indians cannot so much as conceive how men should make any difficulty about it: "My wife and I, "(said one of them to a missionary, who endeavoured to "bring him to a sense of the indecency of this sort of separations), cannot live in peace together; my neighbour is "exactly in the same situation, we have agreed to exchange wives and are all four perfectly well satisfied: now "what can be more reasonable than to render one another "mutually happy when it can be so easily brought about, "and without hurting any body:" This custom however as I have already remarked, is looked upon as an abuse, and is of no great antiquity, at least among the Iroquois.

What most commonly destroys the peace of families amongst the Canadian nations is jealousy, to which both sexes are equally subject. The Iroquois boast of being free from this evil; but those who have been most conversant among them assure us, that they are jealous to an extravagant height. When a woman has discovered that her husband likes another, her rival must take care to keep well upon her guard, and the more so as the unfaithful husband can neither defend her, nor side with her in any manner; a man who should maltreat his wife on this account would be disgraced for ever.

The



The parents are the only match-makers in this country; the parties concerned never appear in it, but abandon themselves blindly to the will of those on whom they depend; but behold the caprice of these barbarians, who suffer themselves to be de-<sup>[s<sup>1</sup>]</sup>pendent on their parents in no case, except in the very thing in which they ought least of all to depend on them: nothing however is concluded without their consent, but this is only a mere piece of formality. The first steps are taken by the matrons, but it is not common for the relations of the young woman to make any advances; not but that in case a girl should happen to remain too long in the market, her family would act underhand in order to get her disposed of, but in this a great deal of caution is used. In some places the girls are in no hurry to get themselves married, as they are at full liberty to make trial of that state beforehand, and as the ceremony of marriage makes no change in their condition except to render it harder.

They remark a great deal of modesty in the behaviour of young people whilst the match is making, though we are told the thing was quite different in ancient times; but what is almost incredible, and which is nevertheless attested by good authors is, that in several places the new married couple live together for a whole year in perfect continence; this is done say they, to shew that they married out of friendship and not to gratify their passions; a young woman would even be pointed at who should prove with child the first year of her marriage.

After what has been said we ought to have less difficulty in believing what is related of the manner in which young people behave during the courtship in those places, in which they are permitted to be alone. For though custom allows them great familiarities, they nevertheless pretend

pretend that in the most extreme danger to which modesty<sup>[52]</sup> can be exposed, and even under the veil of night, there passes nothing which transgresses the rules of the most rigid decorum, and that not a word is uttered which can offend the chastest ear. I flatter myself your Grace will not be offended, that I do not enter into the same detail on this subject with other authors; and especially as all they have said contributes nothing to the credit of their accounts.

I find many different relations with regard to the preliminaries and ceremonies of marriage amongst these nations; whether this proceeds from the different customs of different nations, or from the want of care in those authors to inform themselves exactly in those points; besides the whole of it seemed to me so little worthy your curiosity, that I believed I ought not to take up your time with it. It is the bridegroom who is to make the presents, in which, as indeed in every thing else, nothing can exceed the respect and decorum he shews his intended spouse; in some places the young man goes and seats himself by the side of the girl in her own cabin, which if she suffers without stirring from her place, she is held as consenting and the marriage is concluded; but through all this difference and respect he lets it plainly be seen, that he is soon to be the master.

In effect amongst the presents she receives, there are some which ought less to be understood as testimonies of friendship, than as so many symbols and admonitions of the slavery, to which she is going to be reduced; such are the collar or straps for carrying burthens, the kettle and a faggot, which are carried into her cabin; this is done in order to give her to understand, that it is to be her office<sup>[53]</sup> to carry burdens, to dress the victuals, and to make the provision of wood.

It



It is even customary in some places for the bride to stock the cabbin, in which she is to make her abode after marriage, with wood sufficient to serve the following winter; and it may be remarked that in all the circumstances I have been mentioning, there is no manner of difference between the nations, in which the women have all the authority, and those in which they have nothing to do with publick business; even those very women who are in some sort mistresses of the state, at least in outward appearance, and who make the principal body of the nation after arriving at a certain age, and when their children are in a condition to cause them to be respected are of no account before this, and in household affairs are no more than the slaves of their husbands.

Generally speaking there is perhaps no nation in the world where the sex is more despised; to call an Indian a woman is the highest affront that can be offered him. Notwithstanding what is odd enough, children belong only to the mother, and acknowledge no authority but hers; the father is always held as a stranger with respect to them, in such manner however that if he is not looked upon as the father, he is at least always respected as the master of the cabbin. I do not know however if this is universal in every point, among all the nations we know in Canada, any more than what I have found in good memoirs, that the young wives, besides the right which their husbands have over them, with respect to the service of the cabbin, are also obliged to provide for all the necessities of their own parents, <sup>[54]</sup> which probably is to be understood of those, who have no-body left to render them these services, and who by reason of their age or infirmities are incapable of serving themselves.

Be this as it will, the bridegroom has also his own peculiar functions; besides hunting and fishing, to which he is obliged during the whole course of his life, he is first of all to make a mattress for his wife, build her a cabbin, or repair that in which they are to live, and whilst he remains with his father and mother-in-law, he is obliged to carry the product of his hunting home to them. Amongst the Iroquois the woman never leaves her cabbin, she being deemed the mistress, or at least the heiress of it; in other nations she goes at the expiration of a year or two after her marriage, to live with her mother-in-law.

The Indian women are generally delivered without pain, and without any assistance; there are some however who are a long time in labour and suffer severely; when this happens they acquaint the young people of it, who when the sick person is least thinking of it, come shouting in a prodigious manner to the door of her cabbin, when the surprize occasions a sudden fright, which procures her an immediate delivery; the women always lie in their own cabbins; several of them are surprized and bring forth at work or on the road; for others as soon as they perceive themselves near their time, a small hut is built without the village, where they remain till forty days after they are brought to bed; I think I remember however to have heard it said, that this is never done except at their first lying-in only.

[55] This term being expired they put out all the fires in the cabbin, to which she is to return; they shake all the cloaths in it, and at her return light a new fire; the same formalities nearly are observed with regard to the sex in general during the time of their courses; and not only while these last, but while a woman is with child, or giving suck, which they commonly do for three years running,

ning, their husbands never come near them; nothing would be more commendable than this custom, provided both parties observed the fidelity they ought all the while, but both sides often fail in this respect; such is the corruption of the heart of man, that the wisest regulations are often productive of the greatest disorders. It is even pretended that the use of certain simples, which have the virtue of keeping back in women the natural consequences of their infidelity, is familiar enough in this country.

Nothing can exceed the care which mothers take of their children whilst in the cradle; but from the moment they have weaned them, they abandon them entirely to themselves; not out of hard heartedness or indifference, for they never lose but with their life the affection they have for them; but from a persuasion that nature ought to be suffered to act upon them, and that she ought not to be confined in any thing. The act which terminates their state of infancy is the imposition of the name, which amongst the Indians is a matter of great importance.

This ceremony is performed at a feast, at which are present none but persons of the same sex with the child that is to be named; during the repast the child remains on the knees of its father or <sup>[56]</sup> mother, who are incessantly recommending it to the genii, and above all to him who is to be his guardian, for each person has one but not from the time of birth; they never invent new names, each family preserves a certain number of them, which they make use of by turns; they even sometimes change them as they grow older, and there are some which cannot be used after a certain age, but I do not believe this practice to be universal; and as it is the custom amongst some nations on assuming a name, to put themselves in the place of the person who last bore it, it sometimes happens that  
a child

a child is called grand-father by a person, who might well enough be his own.

They never call a man by his own name when they speak to him in a familiar manner; this would be a piece of great unpoliteness, they always name him by the relation he bears to the person that speaks to him; but when there is neither affinity nor consanguinity between them; they call one another brother, uncle, nephew or cousin, according to the age of either, or in proportion to the esteem in which they hold the person to whom they address themselves.

Farther, it is not so much with a view of perpetuating names that they renew them, as with a view to incite the person on whom they are bestowed, either to imitate the great actions of the persons that bore them, or to revenge them in case they have been either killed or burned; or lastly to comfort their families: thus a woman who has lost her husband or her son, and finds herself thus void of all support makes all the haste in her power, to give the name of the person she mourns for, to some one who may stand <sup>[57]</sup> her in his stead; lastly, they likewise change their names on several other occasions, which it would take up too much time to mention minutely. In order to do this there wants only a dream, or the prescription of some physician, or some other reason equally frivolous. But I have already said enough on this subject, and a messenger waits below for my commands for Quebec; I therefore conclude in assuring your Grace, that

*I ever am, &c.*

LETTER

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## LETTER TWENTIETH.

*Voyage to the Bay. Description of it, and of the Course thither. Irruption of the Spaniards into the Country of the Missouri Indians, and their Defeat. Dances of the Indians.*

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MICHILLIMAKINAC, July 21, 1721.

MADAM,

SINCE my last letter, I have made a voyage to the Bay, which is about four-score leagues distant from this post.<sup>1</sup> I took the advantage for this purpose of going in company with Mons. Montigny, captain of a company of the troops which the king maintains in Canada, Knight of St. Lewis, and whose name is famous in the annals of the colony; but who is at least equally respected for his probity, and for his upright open deportment, and for his valour and military exploits.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Green Bay was never so called by the French; to them it was La Baye des Puants, or more simply La Baye.

<sup>2</sup> Jacques Testard dit La Marque Sieur de Montigny was born in 1663. Coming to New France as an officer he took part in 1690 in the attack upon Schenectady, in which affair he was wounded. Having been promoted for bravery he was sent in 1695 to command in Acadia, where in 1703-1706 he led expeditions against the English. He had been promoted to a captaincy before being made commandant at La Baye; from this post he was transferred in 1723 to Mackinac, where he was a second time from 1730 to 1733. He died in 1737. He was esteemed a very able officer, well adapted to command posts among treacherous tribesmen.

We



We embarked the 2d of July in the afternoon, and for thirty leagues coasted along a neck of land which separates lake Michigan from lake Superior; in some places it is only a few leagues over, and it is scarce possible to see a more disagreeable country; but it is terminated by a beautiful river called La <sup>[60]</sup> Manistie, abounding in fish and especially sturgeon.<sup>3</sup> A little farther inclining to the southwest, you come to a large gulph, in the entry of which are a number of islands, and which is called the gulph or bay of the *Noquets*.<sup>4</sup> This is the name of an Indian nation, not very numerous, originally come from the coasts of lake Superior, and of which there remain only a few scattered families, who have no fixed residence.<sup>5</sup>

The bay of the Noquets is separated from the great bay only by the islands of the Poutewatamies, which as I have already remarked, were the ancient residence of these Indians; most of them are extremely well wooded; but the only one that is now inhabited is neither the largest nor the best, and there remains a sorry village,<sup>6</sup> where, in spite of all our endeavours, we were obliged to pass the night, as it was impossible to resist the pressing instances of the inhabitants. For there is not a nation in all Canada more sincerely attached to the French, than these Indians have been at all times.

On the sixth, we were stopt almost the whole day, by contrary winds, but it growing calm in the evening, we embarked a little after sun-set, by the favour of a most

<sup>3</sup>Manistique River in Schoolcraft County, Michigan.

<sup>4</sup>Still called Big Bay de Noquet.

<sup>5</sup>For the Noquet Indians see *ante*, letter XI, vol. I, 270, note 40.

<sup>6</sup>Remains of a large Indian village have been found on Detroit Island at the entrance of Green Bay. It has also a fine harbor and after making the so-called "grand traverse" across the mouth of the bay from Point Detour to Death's Door, Detroit Island would be the natural stopping place. This information has been received from Mr. Arthur C. Neville of Green Bay, who knows the topography thoroughly.

beautiful



beautiful moon-shine, and continued our voyage for four and twenty hours together, having made only a very small halt, whilst we were saying mass and at dinner. The sun was so burning hot, and the water of the bay so warm, that the gum of our canoe melted in several places. To compleat our misfortune, the place where we went ashore, was so much infested with what are called here *mari-gouins*<sup>7</sup> and *bruleaus*, a species of very troublesome gnats, that we could not so much as <sup>[61]</sup> close our eyes, though we had not slept for two days; and as the weather was fine, and the moon shone bright, we set out again at three o'clock in the morning.

After we had advanced five or six leagues, we found ourselves abreast of a little island, which lies near the western side of the bay,<sup>8</sup> and which concealed from our view, the mouth of a river, on which stands the village of the Malhomines Indians,<sup>9</sup> called by our French *Folles Avoines* or Wild Oat Indians, probably from their living chiefly on this sort of grain.<sup>10</sup> The whole nation consists only of this village, and that too not very numerous. 'Tis really great pity, they being the finest and handsomest men in all Canada. They are even of a larger stature than the Poutewatamies. I have been assured that they had the same original and nearly the same languages with the Noquets, and the Indians at the Falls.<sup>11</sup> But they add that they

<sup>7</sup>The French word for mosquitoes.

<sup>8</sup>Probably this was one of the small islands in the mouth of the Menominee River; though little more than sandbars they were covered with a heavy growth of willows. Upon one of these islands the present government breakwater is built.

<sup>9</sup>For the Menominee (Malhomines) Indians see *ante*, letter XI, vol. I, 270, note 44.

<sup>10</sup>Folles Avoines is the French term for the wild rice, which was an important food supply for Wisconsin Indians. See A. E. Jenks, "Wild rice gatherers of the upper Lakes," in United States Bureau of Ethnology XIX *Annual Report*.

<sup>11</sup>The Saulteur or Chippewa Indians; for this tribe see *ante*, letter XI, vol. I, 269, note 34.

have

have likewise a language peculiar to themselves which they never communicate. I have also been told several stories of them, as of a serpent which visits their village every year and is received with much ceremony, which makes me believe them a little addicted to witchcraft.<sup>12</sup>

A little below the island the face of the country is entirely changed, and from being very wild, as it is as far as this place, it becomes the most delightful in the universe. It is even something more pleasing and chearful than the Narrows; but though it is every where covered with the finest trees, yet it is more sandy, and therefore less fertile. The Otchagra Indians, commonly called Stinkards,<sup>13</sup> dwelt formerly on the shore of the Bay, and in a most charming situation; they were attacked here by <sup>[62]</sup> the Illinois, who killed a great number of them; the rest of them took shelter on the river of the Outagamies, which falls into the bottom of the Bay.<sup>14</sup>

Here they settled on the banks of a kind of lake.<sup>15</sup> And I do not know whether it is not from their living on fish, with which the lake plentifully supplies them, that they had the name of Stinkards given them, there being nothing to be seen along the whole shore where their cabbins were built, but stinking fish, with which the air was perfectly infected. It appears at least that this is the original of the name the other Indians had given them before us;

<sup>12</sup> The peculiar language of the Menominee refers to the terms used by the medicine band or secret society called the Mitawin. Many archaic and nonsense terms are introduced during the ceremonies to confuse outsiders, not members of the association. Serpent myths are common to many tribes. In recent years Keshena Lake was believed to be the habitation of the giant, horned, hairy serpent of legend. See Alanson Skinner, "Associations and Ceremonies of the Menomini Indians," in American Museum of Natural History, *Anthropological Papers*, XIII.

<sup>13</sup> For these Indians, whose French appellation was Puants, see *ante*, letter XI, vol. I, 270, note 43.

<sup>14</sup> For the origin of this name see *ante*, letter XI, vol. I, 271, note 45.

<sup>15</sup> Lake Winnebago.

and

and which has been communicated to the Bay, from which they have never gone to any considerable distance.<sup>16</sup> Some time before they quitted their ancient post, they had a mind to revenge the check they had got from the Illinois; but this enterprize occasioned them a new disaster, from the effects of which they have never recovered themselves. Six hundred of their best warriors embarked, in order to go in quest of the enemy; but as they were crossing Lake Michigan, they were surprized by a furious tempest, in which they all perished to a man.<sup>17</sup>

We have in the Bay, a fort erected on the western shore of the river of the Outagamies, and half a league from its mouth;<sup>18</sup> before you arrive at it, you leave on your right a village of the Sakies.<sup>19</sup> The Otchagras have lately settled themselves near us, and have built their cabbins quite round the fort. The missionary<sup>20</sup> who is lodged pretty near the commandant, is in hopes, that when he shall have learned their language, he may possibly find more docility amongst them, than amongst the <sup>[63]</sup> Sakies, with whom his labours have been sufficiently unsuccessful. Both of them appear to be a very good sort of people and especially the former, whose greatest defect is, that they seem to be a little addicted to thieving. Their lan-

<sup>16</sup>The name "Puants" is usually interpreted to be a misunderstanding of the word for salt water. See Kellogg, *Early Narratives*, 16, note 1.

<sup>17</sup>For this tradition see *Wis. His. Colls.*, xvi, 4-7.

<sup>18</sup>This fort was on the site of the later Fort Howard. It was occasionally called St. François, but officially it was Fort La Baye. It was built in 1717, destroyed in 1728, rebuilt in 1731, and maintained until the coming in 1761 of an English garrison.

<sup>19</sup>For the Sauk see *ante*, letter XI, vol. I, 270, note 42. Their village was situated on the east side of Fox River, where the lower business portion of the city of Green Bay now stands.

<sup>20</sup>This was Father Jean Baptiste Chardon, who came to the mission of St. François Xavier at De Pere in 1701 and was its last incumbent. In 1711 he was at St. Joseph, whence he returned on the building of the fort at Green Bay. He seems to have left this mission in 1728.

guage is very different from that of all the rest, which makes me believe, that it holds no resemblance with any of those of Canada. Thus, they have always had more commerce or intercourse with the western nations, than with those with which we are acquainted.

The Sakies, though few in number, are divided into two factions, one of which is in the interest of the Outagamies, and the other in that of the Poutewatamies. Those of them who are settled in this post are mostly of the party of the latter, and consequently are friends to us. They received the new commandant with great demonstrations of joy: the moment they were informed of his approach, they drew up under arms on the shore, and as soon as he appeared, saluted him with a discharge of their muskets, which they accompanied with great shouts of joy. Afterwards four of their chief men waded into the river, till the water came up to their middle; advanced up to his canoe, and received him on a large robe, composed of several skins of roe-bucks well sowed together, whereof each of them held a corner. In this manner they carried him to his apartment, where they complimented him, and said a great many things extremely flattering.

Next day, the chiefs of the two nations paid me a visit; and one of the Otchagras shewed me a Catalonian pistol, a pair of Spanish shoes, and I do not know what drug, which appeared to me to be a sort of ointment. All this they had received <sup>[64]</sup> from one of the Aiouez, and the following is the occasion, by means of which these things fell into the hands of this person.<sup>21</sup>

About two years ago, some Spaniards, who had come, as they say, from New Mexico, with design to penetrate as far as the country of the Illinois, and to drive the

<sup>21</sup> For the Aiouez or Iowa Indians see *ante*, letter XIII, vol. I, 304, note 16.

French out of it, whom they saw with extreme regret approach so near the Missouri, descended this river and attacked two villages of the Octotatas,<sup>22</sup> a people in alliance with the Aiouez, from whom it is pretended they draw their original. As these Indians had no fire-arms, and being besides surprized, the Spaniards easily succeeded in their enterprize, and made a great slaughter of them. A third village of the same nation, and at no great distance from the two others, making no doubt that the conquerors would pay them a visit, laid an ambuscade for them, into which the Spaniards blindly stumbled. Others say, that the Indians having learned that the Spaniards had almost all of them got drunk, and were sleeping in great security, fell upon them in the night, and it is certain they cut the throats of almost every one of them.<sup>23</sup>

There were two chaplains in this party, one of whom was killed in the beginning of the affair, and the other saved himself amongst the Missourites who kept him prisoner, and from whom he made his escape in a very dexterous manner. He happened to have a very fine horse, and the Missourites delighting in beholding him perform feats of horsemanship, he took the advantage of their curiosity, in order to get out of their hands. One day as he was scampering about in their presence, he withdrew insensibly to a distance, when clapping spurs to his horse, he instantly disappeared.<sup>24</sup> As they made no <sup>[65]</sup> other prisoner but him, it is not yet exactly known neither from what

<sup>22</sup>The Missouri and Oto (Octotata) were of Siouan stock, forming with the Iowa and the Winnebago one of its chief divisions. The Missouri and Oto dwelt on the Missouri River; the former in the state of that name, the latter higher up the river.

<sup>23</sup>This was the disastrous expedition of Pedro de Villazur, which in 1720 was cut to pieces by the Plains Indians. See Bolton and Marshall, *Colonization of North America* (New York, 1920), 296; *Kansas Hist. Colls.*, XI, 397-423.

<sup>24</sup>It appears that there was but one chaplain, Fray Juan Minquez. Charlevoix heard only confused Indian accounts.



part of New Mexico these Spaniards came, nor with what design: for what I first told you of the affair, was founded upon the reports of the Indians only, who perhaps had a mind to make their court to us by giving it to be understood, that they had done us a very material piece of service by this defeat.

All they brought me was the spoils of the chaplain who had been killed, and they found likewise a prayer-book, which I have not seen: this was probably his breviary. I bought the pistol: the shoes were good for nothing; and the Indian would by no means part with the ointment, having taken it into his head, that it was a sovereign remedy against all sorts of evils. I was curious to know how he intended to make use of it; he answered that it was sufficient to swallow a little of it, and let the disease be what it would the cure was immediate; he did not say however that he had as yet made trial of it, and I advised him against it. The Indians begin here to be very ignorant, and are very far from being so sensible or at least so communicative, as those who have more commerce with us.

The day following, the Sakies came in a considerable body to the missionary's house, where I lodged, and begged me to be present at a council they were going to hold. I consented, and when every one had taken his place, the chief laid a collar upon the ground before me, and the orator breaking silence, besought me, in the name of the whole body, to engage the King to take them under his protection, and to purify the air, which, said they, had been corrupted for some time past; which <sup>[66]</sup> appeared by the great number of sick they had in their villages, and to defend them against their enemies.

I answered, that the King was indeed very powerful, and perhaps more so than they thought; but that his power



er did not extend over the elements; and that when diseases or any other such accidents laid waste his provinces, he addressed himself, in order to make them cease, to the Great Spirit who created the heaven and the earth, and who alone is the sovereign Lord of nature: that they should do the same, and that they would find themselves the better for it; but that in order to merit being heard, they must begin with acknowledging him, and with rendering him that worship and homage which he has a right to expect from all reasonable creatures: and that they could not do any thing better or more agreeable to the King, than to hearken to the Father whom his Majesty had sent them, and to his instructions; that he was a man beloved of heaven; that the manner in which he lived amongst them, could not fail to have caused them conceive a great esteem for him; and that his charity towards the sick and all such as had any need of his assistance, ought to have convinced them of that tender and sincere friendship he bore them: lastly, that I would by no means receive it, till after they had promised to behave themselves with regard to this missionary, in a quite different manner from what they had hitherto done, and henceforth to remove all cause of complaint against them, with respect to their indocility.

“As to the protection of the King which you demand, “and the request you have made me to engage him to undertake your defence against <sup>[67]</sup> your enemies; that “great prince has already anticipated your wishes, and has “given sufficient orders on that head to Ononthio,<sup>25</sup> who “is of himself disposed to execute them with all the zeal

<sup>25</sup>This is the name which the Indians give to the governor-general; it signifies *great mountain*, and is derived from the Chevalier Montmagny who was the second governor of Canada. — CHARLEVOIX.

“and

“and affection of a father.<sup>26</sup> This is what you need make  
 “no doubt of, if you pay a proper regard to the good qual-  
 “ities of the commandant he has sent you. It is not pos-  
 “sible you should be ignorant, and you appear to me per-  
 “fectly well satisfied that amongst all the French Cap-  
 “tains there are few equal to him in valour; and you will  
 “have cause to love him still better than you now do.”  
 This answer seemed to satisfy them, and they promised  
 much more than I fear they will ever perform. Notwith-  
 standing I took their collar, which the missionary flattered  
 himself would be productive of some good effects.

On the afternoon of the following day the two nations  
 entertained us, one after another, with the dance of the  
 Calumet, in a great esplanade facing the commandant’s  
 apartment. There was some little difference in the man-  
 ner in which they performed this dance; but this was very  
 inconsiderable. It only gave me to understand, that these  
 feasts vary considerably: thus it is impossible to give a de-  
 scription which may agree to all of them. The Otchagras  
 diversified somewhat more their entertainment, and  
 shewed extraordinary agility, being better made as well  
 as more graceful performers than the Sakies.

[<sup>68</sup>] This is properly a military festival, in which the  
 warriors are the sole actors, and one would naturally con-  
 clude it had been instituted only to give them an oppor-  
 tunity of vaunting of their famous exploits. I am not the  
 author of this opinion, which does not square with the  
 sentiments of those who maintain that the calumet derives  
 its origin from the caduceus of Mercury, and that on its  
 first institution it was looked upon as a symbol of peace.  
 All those whom I saw dancing, singing, and beating the

<sup>26</sup>They always call the governors and the commandants their Fathers.—CHARLE-  
 VOIX.

drum and chichikoué, were young persons equipt as when they prepare to take the field; they had their faces painted with all sorts of colours, their heads were adorned with feathers, some of which they held in their hands by way of fans: and the calumet was also adorned with them and was set in the most conspicuous place: the orchestra and the dancers were placed quite round, the spectators being placed up and down in small bodies, the women apart from the men, all of them sitting on the ground, and adorned with their finest robes, which at a distance made a very pretty appearance.

Between the orchestra and the commandant who sat at the door of his own apartment, they had erected a post, to which at the end of each dance, a warrior came and gave a blow with his battle-ax; on this signal followed profound silence, when this man proclaimed some of his own valorous achievements; and receiving afterwards the applause of the company, he returned to his place, when the games begun again. This lasted four hours, two for each nation, and I confess I was far from being charmed with it, not only on account of the monotony and unpleasantness of the musick, but also because the whole of the dances consisted <sup>[69]</sup> only of certain contorsions of the body, which in appearance were expressive of nothing, and had nothing diverting.<sup>27</sup>

The feast was made in honour of the new commandant; they however paid him none of those honours mentioned in some relations. They were neither seen to place him on a new mattress; nor to make him any present, at least as far as I know, nor did they place any feathers on his head, nor did I see them present him the calumet; and there

<sup>27</sup>The calumet dance was used for both peace and war. On its several uses see *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, xvii, 195-196.

were not any men entirely naked painted all over their bodies, adorned with feathers and strings of wampum, and holding a calumet in their hands. Perhaps these two nations have not any such customs, or it may be, that Mons. de Montigny had exempted them from this part of the ceremony. I observed only from time to time all the spectators raising great cries by way of applauding the dancers, especially during the dance of the Otchagras, who in the opinion of the French bore away all the honour of the day.

I should probably have been more diverted by seeing the dance of the *Discovery*. This has more action than the former, and is much more expressive of the thing it is intended to represent. This is an image drawn to the life of all that passes in a warlike expedition; and as I have already observed, that the Indians generally think only of surprizing their enemies, it is no doubt for this reason, they have given this exercise the name of the *Discovery*.

Be this as it will, one man always dances singly in it, advancing at first slowly towards the middle <sup>[70]</sup> of the place, where he remains for some time motionless, after which he represents in order the departure of the warriors; their march encampments, the discovery of the enemy, the approach towards them, the halt as it were in order to draw breath, when all of a sudden he falls into such a fury as if he were going to kill all the world; when recovered from this trance, he seizes some person in the assembly as if he took him prisoner of war, seems to kill another, levels at a third, and lastly falls a running at full speed, when he stops and recovers himself; this represents a retreat which is at first precipitate, but afterwards more at leisure. He then expresses by different cries, the different agitations in which he was during his last campaign, and  
concludes

concludes with relating all the fine exploits he has performed in war.

When the dance of the Calumet has for its object, as is generally the case, the conclusion of a peace, or of some treaty of alliance against a common enemy, they engrave a serpent on the stalk of the pipe, and near it is placed a plate, on which are represented two men of the two confederate nations trampling upon an enemy, who is designed by the mark of his nation. Sometimes instead of the calumet they make use of a battle-ax. But when the subject of the treaty is only a simple alliance, they represent two men holding each other by one hand and bearing in the other a calumet of peace, and having each at his side the mark of his nation. In all these treaties they give mutual pledges, such as collars of porcelain or wampum, calumets, slaves: sometimes the hides of deer or elks well tanned, adorned with figures made of the hair of the porcupine;<sup>28</sup> in which case, the above-mentioned circumstances are represented <sup>[71]</sup> on these skins, whether with the hair of the porcupine or simple colours.

There are other dances which are more simple, or which seem to have no other view besides giving the warriors opportunity of relating their own exploits. This is what the Indians covet above all things, and in doing of which they are never wearied. He who gives the feast, invites the whole village by beat of drum; and it is in his cabbin they assemble, if it be capable of containing all the guests. The warriors dance here by turns, afterwards they strike upon the post, silence is proclaimed, when they say any thing they have a mind, pausing from time to time in order to receive the congratulations of the spectators who

<sup>28</sup> Porcupine quills were much used by the Indians for ornamental purposes. They were frequently dyed, and embroidered upon cloth, bark, or other fabrics.



are not sparing of incense. But if they perceive that any one boasts without grounds, any one is at liberty to take earth or ashes, and to smear his head all over or to do him any other affront they have a mind. The general way is to black his face, accosting him in these words, "This I do to conceal your shame; for the first time you see the face of an enemy, you will become as pale as ashes." Thus, it seems to be a received maxim amongst all nations, that the surest mark of a coward is boasting. He who has thus punished the recreant takes his place, and if he has the misfortune to fall into the same fault the other is sure to pay him back in kind. The greatest chiefs have no privilege above the common in this respect, and must take all without murmuring. This dance is always performed in the night-time.

In the western parts they have another sort of dance, which is called the Buffalo dance. The dancers form several circles within each other, and the <sup>[72]</sup> musick which is always composed of the drum and the chichikoué, is in the middle of the place. They take care never to separate those of the same family; they do not hold one another by the hand, and each carries his arms and buckler. The circles turn round different ways, and though there is much capering in which they spring to a great height, they are never out of time.

Some chief of a family presents his buckler at certain intervals: all of them strike upon it, and at each stroke he calls to remembrance some of his famous exploits: he afterwards cuts a bit of tobacco from a post to which they take care to tie a certain quantity, which he gives to one of his friends. If any one can prove he has performed more famous exploits than he, or that he has had any share in those of which he has been boasting, he has a  
right



right to take away the tobacco of which he has just made a present, and to give it to another. This dance is followed by a feast; but I do not well know whence it had the name it bears, if it does not come from the bucklers on which they strike, which are covered with buffaloes' hides. There are some dances which are prescribed by their quacks for the cure of sick persons; but they are generally very lascivious. There are some of them calculated purely for amusement, and which have no relation to any thing. These are always in the form of a circle to the sound of the drum and chichikoué, and the women always apart from the men. These latter dance bearing their arms in their hands, and though they have no hold of one another, they never break the circle. As to what I mentioned of their never losing time, this ought to create no difficulty, the musick of the Indians <sup>[73]</sup> consisting only of two or three notes, which are eternally repeated. On this account one is apt to grow extremely weary at those feasts after the first time, as they last a great while, and as you hear always the same thing over again.<sup>29</sup>

As the nations in the neighbourhood of the Bay, if you except the Poutewatamies, are much more ignorant than the others, they are likewise much more addicted to all sorts of superstition. Their principal divinities are the sun and thunder, and they seem much more persuaded than the nations which we frequent more, that every species of animals has a genius that watches for their preservation. A Frenchman having one day thrown away a mouse he had just taken, a little girl took it up to eat it; the father of the child, who perceived it, snatched it from her, and

<sup>29</sup>Recent studies of Indian music have yielded interesting results. See Bibliography in *Handbook of North American Indians* (Washington, 1907), I, 959-960. Miss Frances Densmore has recently obtained many phonographic records of Indian music for the United States Bureau of Ethnology.

fell a caressing the dead animal; and the Frenchman asking him the reason of it: "It is," answered he, "in order to appease the genius of the mice, that they may not torment my child after she has eaten it." After which he restored the animal to the girl who ate it.

They have above all things a prodigious veneration for bears: when they happen to have killed one, they make a feast which is accompanied with very singular ceremonies. The head of the bear, after being painted with all sorts of colours, is set during the repast in a conspicuous place, where it receives the homage of all the guests, who celebrate in songs the praises of the animal, whilst they are tearing his body in pieces and regaling themselves with it. These Indians have not only like all the rest a custom of preparing <sup>[74]</sup> themselves for great huntings by fasting, which the Outagamies carry as far as ten days running; but also whilst the hunters are in the field, they often oblige the children to fast, they observe the dreams they have during their fasts, and from them they draw good or evil omens, with respect to the success of the hunting. The intention of these fasts, is to appease the tutelary genii of the animals they are going to hunt; and they pretend that they make known in dreams, whether they are to oppose or to be propitious to the hunters.<sup>30</sup>

The nation that has occasioned most discourse in these western parts, for the last twenty years, is that of the Outagamies. The natural ferocity of these Indians soured by the repeated ill treatment they have received and sometimes imprudently enough; and their alliance with the Iroquois, always disposed to stir up new enemies against us, have rendered them formidable. They have

<sup>30</sup>Fasting plays an important part in the Indian ritual. It is employed to induce dreams from which many superstitions arise.

since

since become still more closely connected with the Sioux, a numerous nation, and who have insensibly become war-like; which union renders almost impracticable at present the navigation of the whole upper Mississippi. There is even very little security in sailing on the river Illinois, at least if you are not provided against a surprize, to the great hurt of the trade between the two colonies.

I met at the Bay some Sioux, to whom I put many questions with respect to the countries lying to the west and north-west of Canada; and though I well know we are not to take in a literal sense all that the Indians tell us, yet by comparing what <sup>[75]</sup> these told me with what I have heard several others say, I have good reason to think, that there are in this continent either Spanish or some other European colonies much more to the north, than what we know of New-Mexico and of California, and that after sailing up the Missouri as far as it is navigable, you come to a great river which runs westward and discharges itself into the South-Sea. And even independent of this discovery, which I believe easier this way than towards the north, I cannot doubt on account of the proofs which I have received from several hands, and which sufficiently well agree, that by endeavouring to penetrate to the source of the Missouri, we should find sufficient to indemnify us for the expence and fatigue which such an enterprize must require.

*I am, &c.*

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## LETTER TWENTY-FIRST.

*Departure from Michillimakinac. Observations on the Currents in the Lakes. Character of the Indians of Canada. Their good and ill Qualities.*

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LAKE MICHIGAN, July 31, 1721.

MADAM,

**I** SET out the day before yesterday, and am now confined to a little nameless island; a canoe which is come from the river St. Joseph where I am going, cannot stir any more than we, although the wind is favourable, but it being in our opinion very squally and the lake being extremely agitated, I am thereby furnished with an opportunity of writing to you.

Though the wind was contrary on the 29th when we embarked, we however advanced full eight leagues that day, which is a proof that we were helped along by the currents; I had before observed the same thing on my first entering the bay, and was much surprized at it. There is no doubt that this bay, which is a *Cul de Sac*, discharges itself into lake Michigan; and lake Michigan, which is also a *Cul de Sac*, discharges itself <sup>[78]</sup> into lake Huron, and the more so as both, I mean lake Michigan and the bay, receive several rivers; lake Michigan especially, which receives

ceives a vast number of them, some of which are no way inferior to the Seine, but these great currents are only perceived in the middle of the channel, and produce on both shores eddies or counter currents, of which those who sail in shore take advantage, as all who sail in canoes of bark are obliged to do.

I advanced at first five leagues westward in order to make lake Michigan; afterwards I turned towards the south, which is the only course we had to steer for a hundred leagues, as far as the river St. Joseph. Nothing can be finer than the country which separates lake Michigan from lake Huron. I yesterday advanced three leagues farther, and a strong wind obliged us to stop at this island; I shall try to divert myself by continuing the account of the character of the natives of this vast country, of which I have already travelled over a considerable part.

The Indians of Canada are generally well made and of an advantageous stature; there are some nations however, where it is no new thing to see persons of a middling size, but it is extremely so to meet with any who are decrepit, or who have any external deformity; they are robust and of a strong and healthy constitution; they would also be very long-lived did they take a little more care of themselves; but most part of them ruin their constitutions by forced marches, by excessive fasting and intemperance in eating; besides that during their infancy they often go barefoot in water, and even upon snow and ice; the spirituous li-<sup>[79]</sup>quors which the Europeans have supplied them with, and for which they entertain a passion, or rather a fury which exceeds all expression, and which they never drink but on purpose to get drunk, have almost ruined them, and have not a little contributed to the depopulation of all the Indian nations, who are at present reduced  
to



to less than the twentieth part of what they were one hundred and fifty years ago. If this continues we shall certainly see them entirely disappear.<sup>1</sup>

Their bodies are not constrained in the cradle like ours, and nothing is more proper to render them agile, and to give them that suppleness in all their members, which we so much admire in them, than this liberty, and the exercises to which they are accustomed from their earliest infancy; the mothers suckle them a great while, and we sometimes see children of six or seven years of age which still suck their mothers; this hinders not their giving them all sorts of nourishment from the first years: lastly, the free and open air to which they are constantly exposed; the fatigues they are made to undergo, but by gentle degrees and in a manner proportioned to their age; their food which is simple and natural; all these contribute to form bodies capable of doing and suffering incredible things, but which are pushed to an extravagance which I have already said, carries off not a few before the age of maturity. Some have been known, after having their stomachs stretched four fingers with eating, still to eat on with as voracious an appetite as if they had only just begun; when they find themselves overloaded they fall to smocking, and afterwards fall asleep, and at their waking find their digestion compleated; sometimes they only set themselves a vomiting, after which they return to the combat quite fresh.

[180] In the southern countries they scarce observe any mean with respect to the women, who are no less prone to lasciviousness; from hence comes that corruption of manners, which has infected the northern nations some years

<sup>1</sup>Recent estimates seem to indicate that the Indian population of North America has not declined to any extent since the discovery. Some tribes have disappeared or amalgamated with others; while other tribes have considerably increased in number since the white men's coming.

since;



since; the Iroquois in particular had the reputation of chastity before they had any commerce with the Illinois, and the other nations in the neighbourhood of Louisiana;<sup>2</sup> they have gained nothing by the acquaintance except becoming like them. It must be confessed that effeminacy and lubricity were carried to the greatest excess in those parts; men were seen to wear the dress of women without a blush, and to debase themselves so as to perform those occupations which are most peculiar to the sex, from whence followed a corruption of morals past all expression; it was pretended that this custom came from I know not what principle of religion; but this religion had like many others taken its birth in the depravation of the heart, or if the custom I speak of had its beginning in the spirit, it has ended in the flesh; these effeminate persons never marry, and abandon themselves to the most infamous passions, for which cause they are held in the most sovereign contempt.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand the women though strong and robust are far from being fruitful; besides the reasons I have already mentioned, to wit, the time they allow for the suckling of their children, their custom of not cohabiting with their husbands all that time, and the excessive labour they are obliged to undergo in whatever situation they are; this sterility proceeds likewise from a custom established in several places, by which young women are suffered to prostitute themselves before marriage; add to this the extreme misery to which <sup>[81]</sup> they are often reduced, and which extinguishes in them all desire of having children.

<sup>2</sup>La Louisiane was the name assigned by La Salle to the Mississippi Valley, in honor of Louis XIV. See La Salle's act of taking possession of Louisiana in *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, xi, 33-35.

<sup>3</sup>These beings were called "berdashes" and were common among the Illinois, being considered somewhat sacred characters even while despised.

It is besides certain that they have great advantages over us, and I hold for the first of all the extreme perfection of their senses over us both internal and external. In spite of the snow which dazzles them, and the smog with which they are pestered for six months of the year, their sight continues in all its vigor; they have the sense of hearing extremely acute, and their smelling is so exquisite, that they smell fire at a great distance; for this reason it is that they cannot suffer the smell of musk, or any other strong scent; and it is even pretended that no smell is agreeable to them, except that of eatables.

Their imagination is a sort of prodigy, it suffices them to have been once in a place to have an exact idea of it, which is never effaced; let a forest be ever so vast and untrodden they will cross it without wandering out of the way, if they have made their observations right at setting out. The inhabitants of Acadia, and places in the neighbourhood of the gulph of St. Lawrence, have often sailed in their canoes of bark, to make a descent on the country of Labrador, in quest of their enemies the Eskimaux; they have gone thirty or forty leagues out in the open sea without any compass, and have landed precisely at the place intended. In the most cloudy weather they will follow the sun for several days, without mistaking; the exactest sun-dial would not inform us better of the course of that beautiful star, than they will do by the inspection of the heavens only; thus let us do what we will to put them out of their way, it is very rare they mistake their road. They are born with this ta- <sup>[82]</sup> lent, so that it is not the fruit of their observations or of long custom. Children who have never been out of their village, will travel equally well with those who have been all over the country.

The

The beauty of their imagination equals its vivacity, which appears in all their discourse: they are very quick at repartees, and their harangues are full of shining passages, which would have been applauded at Rome and Athens. Their eloquence has a strength, nature, and pathos, which no art can give, and which the Greeks admired in the barbarians; and though this is supported by none of the action of an orator, and though they never raise their voice to any considerable pitch, yet you perceive that they are affected with what they say, and they persuade.

It would be really surprizing if with so fine an imagination, they had not also an excellent memory. They are without all those helps which we have invented to ease our memory, or to supply the want of it; yet you cannot imagine what an infinite number of different topics, with an immense detail of circumstances, and an amazing order, are handled in their councils. On some occasions however they make use of little sticks, to remind them of the different articles they have to discuss; and with ease they form a kind of local memory, and that so sure and infallible, that they will speak for four or five hours together, and display twenty different presents, each of which requires an entire discourse, without forgetting any thing, and even without hesitation. Their narration is neat and precise; and though they use a great many allegories and other figures, yet it is lively, and has all the beauties which their language affords.

[83] They have a clear and solid judgment, and come at once to the point, without the least stop or deviation. They easily conceive whatever is within their reach, but it would require a long time and much labour, to put them in a condition of succeeding in the arts, with which they have

have hitherto dispensed, and whereof they have not the smallest notion; and the more so as they have a sovereign contempt of whatever is not necessary, that is to say, for that which we hold in the greatest estimation. It would also be no easy matter to render them capable of constraint, or to applying to things purely spiritual, or which they look upon as useless. As for those which they imagine of consequence, they observe the greatest care and deliberation; and in proportion as they discover phlegm in considering before they have taken their measures, they testify vivacity and ardour in the execution; this is remarked in an especial manner in the Hurons and Iroquois. They are not only quick but also very ingenious, and smart in their repartees. An Outaway called *Jean le Blanc*, who was a bad christian and a great drunkard, on being asked by the Count de Frontenac, what he thought the brandy he was so fond of was made of, he said, of tongues and hearts; for, added he, after I have drank of it I fear nothing, and I talk like an angel.<sup>4</sup>

Most of them have really a nobleness of soul and a constancy of mind, at which we rarely arrive, with all the assistance of philosophy and religion. Always masters of themselves in the most sudden reverses of fortune, not the smallest alteration is seen even in their countenances; a prisoner who knows what is to be the end of his captivity, or what is perhaps more surprizing, who is <sup>[84]</sup> still uncertain of his fate, loses not one quarter of an hour of his rest; and even the first and most sudden shocks of passion never surprize them. A Huron captain was one day insulted and struck by a young man, and the by-standers

<sup>4</sup>Jean le Blanc, formerly of Mackinac, removed in 1701 to Detroit, where he was a prominent chief. For another anecdote of this chief and Count de Frontenac see *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, xvi, 250.

going

going to punish this insolence on the spot; "Let him alone," replied the captain, "did you not perceive the earth to quake, by that he is sufficiently warned of his folly."

Their constancy in torments is beyond all expression. A young woman will be a whole day in labour without a shriek; should she discover the least weakness she would be held unworthy the name of mother, as being only capable of bringing forth cowards. Nothing is more common than to see persons of every age and sex suffer for several hours, and even sometimes for several days together, all the torments which fire, or the most insatiable fury can inflict or invent, in order to render them the more exquisite, without so much as a groan; they are even most commonly employed during their torture in provoking their executioners by the most gauling reproaches.

An Outagamie, whom the Illinois were burning with the utmost barbarity, having perceived a Frenchman amongst the spectators, begged him to have the goodness to assist his enemies in tormenting him; and upon the other's asking him the reason of this request, "It is," answered he, "because I should then have the consolation of dying by the hands of a man." "My greatest regret," added he, "is that I have never killed a man." "But," returned an Illinois, "you have killed such and such persons." "As for the Illinois," re-<sup>[85]</sup>plied the patient, "I have killed a sufficient number of them, but I do not reckon these to be men."

What I have remarked elsewhere in order to diminish the surprize which such an insensibility might occasion, hinders us not from acknowledging an extraordinary courage in them. But however, in order to elevate the soul to such a degree, beyond all sense of feeling, requires an effort of which vulgar souls are utterly incapable; this the  
Indians



Indians exercise themselves in during their whole lives, and accustom their children to it from their tenderest infancy. Little boys and girls have been seen to tie themselves together by an arm, and to put between a red coal to see who would shrink first. Lastly, we must also agree, that according to the remark of Cicero, the habit of labour renders torments the more supportable. Now there is not perhaps in the whole world a people, who endure more fatigue than the Indians, both in their huntings and voyages. In a word, what proves this insensibility in these barbarians, to be the effect of true courage is, that all of them are not equally possessed of it.

It is no wonder that with such a firmness of mind, and with sentiments so elevated, the Indians should be intrepid in the midst of danger, and of a courage which nothing can shake; it is nevertheless true, that in their wars they expose themselves as little as possible, only because they place their glory in never buying victory too dear, and that as their nations are thin of people, they have adopted this maxim to weaken themselves as little as possible; but when they are under a necessity of fighting, they behave like lions, and the sight of <sup>[186]</sup> their blood serves only to inspire them with new strength and courage. They have been several times in action in company with our bra-voes, who have seen them perform exploits almost incredible.

A missionary being accompanied by some Abenakis in an expedition against New England, and perceiving that they were pursued by a great body of English in their retreat, did all he could to cause them to make more haste but to no purpose; all the answer he received was, that they did not fear such people as these. The English at length appeared, and were at least twenty to one. The Indians,



dians, without being at all intimidated, first placed the father in safety, and afterwards went to wait for the enemy in a field, in which there was only the trunks of some trees. The combat lasted almost the whole day; the Abenakis lost not a man, and put the English to flight, after having covered the field with dead bodies. I had this fact from father Vincent Bigot, who was the missionary in question.<sup>5</sup>

But what is infinitely surprizing in men, whose whole exterior discovers nothing but the barbarian, is to see them treat one another with a gentleness and a respect unknown to the common people in the most polite nations. This no doubt proceeds from this, that *meum* and *tuum*, these cold words, as St. Chrysostom calls them, but which whilst they extinguish in our hearts the fire of charity, kindle up in them that of covetousness, are not as yet known amongst these Indians. We are no less charmed with that natural and unaffected gravity, which reigns in all their actions, and even in most of their diversions, as well as with that frankness, and that deference they discover towards their <sup>[87]</sup> equals, and the respect shewn by young people to old age; and lastly, that we never see them in their quarrels make use of any indecent expressions, and those oaths so common amongst us; all of them proofs of their good sense and moderation.

I have told your Grace that it is a maxim adopted amongst them, and of which they are jealous above all things, that one man owes nothing to another: but from this evil principle they derive a very good consequence, to wit, that we must never injure a person who has not of-

<sup>5</sup>Father Vincent Bigot came to Canada in 1680, and fourteen years later founded the Abenaki mission on the border of Maine, where he remained until in 1704 he became superior of all the Canadian missions. In 1713 he removed to France, where he died in 1720.

fended us. There wants only to compleat their happiness to do between nation and nation, as they almost always do between man and man; and never to attack a people who have given them no grounds of complaint, and not to push their thirst of vengeance so very far.

We must however agree that what we most admire in the Indians is not always to be attributed to pure virtue; that their natural disposition and their vanity, have a great share in it, and that their brightest qualities are obscured by great vices. These very men who appear to us so very contemptible at first sight, hold all the rest of mankind in the greatest contempt; and have the highest notion of themselves. The proudest of all were the Hurons, till success puffed up the Iroquois and inspired them with a haughtiness, which nothing has hitherto been able to tame, together with a brutal ferocity which always constituted their chief characteristick.

On the other hand these people, so haughty and so jealous of their liberty, are beyond imagination <sup>[88]</sup> slaves to human respect; they are also accused of being light and inconstant; but this is rather owing to the spirit of independence than to their natural character, as I have already remarked of the Canadians. They are easily offended, jealous and suspicious, especially of us Frenchmen; treacherous when it is for their interest; great dissemblers, and exceeding vindictive; no length of time extinguishes in them the thirst of vengeance; this is the dearest inheritance they leave to their children, and is transmitted from generation to generation, till an occasion is found to put it in execution.

With respect to the qualities of the heart, the Indians do not value themselves much upon them, or, to speak more properly, have no virtues in them: they seem even incapable

capable of considering them in this light; friendship, compassion, gratitude, attachment, are all known to them in some degree, but proceed not from the heart, and are in them less the effect of a good natural disposition, than of reflection. Their care of orphans, widows and infirm persons, the hospitality which they exercise in so admirable a manner, are in them no more than a consequence of a persuasion, that all ought to be in common amongst men. Fathers and mothers have an affection for their children which extends even to weakness, but which never induces them to render them virtuous, and which appears purely animal. Children on their side shew no return of natural love for their parents, and even sometimes treat them with indignity, especially their fathers. I have been told examples of it which strike us with horror, and which I can not relate: that which follows was publicly known.

[89] An Iroquois who had served a long time in our troops against his own nation, and even in quality of an officer, met his father in an engagement, and was going to run him through, when he discovered who he was. He stopt, and accosted him in this manner, "You have once given me life, and I have this day returned the obligation; but have a care of meeting me another time, as I am now quit of that debt of nature which I owed you." Nothing can be a stronger proof of the necessity of education, and that nature alone is incapable of instructing us sufficiently in the most essential duties of life: and what, if I am not deceived, is a more evident demonstration of the superior sanctity of the christian religion is, that it has produced in the heart of these barbarians, in all these respects, a change which is perfectly wonderful.

But if the Indians are incapable of tasting the sweets of friendship, they have at least discovered the advantage of it.

it. Every one has a friend nearly the same age with himself, to whom he attaches himself by the most indissoluble bonds. Two persons thus united by one common interest, are capable of undertaking and hazarding every thing in order to aid and mutually succour each other: death itself, according to their belief, can only separate them for a time: they are well assured of meeting again in the other world never to part, where they are persuaded they will have occasion for the same services from one another.

I have been told a story on this head, that an Indian who was a Christian, but who did not live according to the maxims of the gospel, and who being <sup>[90]</sup> threatened with hell by a Jesuit, asked this missionary, whether he thought his friend who was lately departed had gone into that place of torment: the father answered him, that he had good grounds to think that the Lord had had mercy upon him: "Then I wont go neither," replied the Indian; and this motive brought him to do every thing that was desired of him; that is to say, that he would have been full as willing to go to hell as to heaven had he thought to find his companion there; but God makes use of every thing for the salvation of his elect. They add, that these friends when they happen to be at a distance from each other, reciprocally invoke one another in all dangers; but this, no doubt, ought to be understood of their tutelary genii. Presents are the ties of these associations, which are strengthened by interest and their mutual necessities; and the assistance they afford may be certainly depended on in almost every case. Some pretend that these friendships open a door to certain irregularities; but I have good grounds to think, that this is at least far from being general.

The colour of the Indians does not, as many believe, constitute a third species of men between the blacks and whites.

whites. They are very tawny and of a dirty and obscure red, which is more sensible in Florida, of which Louisiana makes a part; but this is not natural to them. The frequent frictions they use, is what gives them this copper complexion, and it is really wonderful that they are not still blacker, being continually exposed to the smoke in winter, and to the greatest heats of the sun in summer, and at all seasons to all the intemperance of the air.

[91] It is not so easy to give a reason why, except the hair of their head which is universally jet black, and their eye-lashes and eye-brows, which some of them even pluck out, they have not a single hair on their whole body. Almost all the Americans are in the same situation. What is still more surprizing is, that their children are born with a long thin hair all over their bodies, but which disappears in eight days. We see also some straggling hairs on the chins of old men, as it happens amongst us to women of a certain age. Some attribute this singularity to the constant custom the Americans of both sexes have of smoaking: what others alledge seems to me more natural, which is, that this proceeds from the quality of their blood, which being purer by reason of the simplicity of their food, produces fewer of those superfluities which our thicker blood occasions in so great an abundance; or that having fewer salts it is less proper for this sort of productions. There is at least no room to doubt that it is owing to this simplicity of their diet, that the Indians are so nimble of foot. I have seen an islander from the neighbourhood of Japan, who having never tasted bread, assured me, that he could with ease have travelled on foot thirty leagues a day for a continuance; but that after beginning to make use of it, he could no longer perform it with the same ease.

What



What is certain is, that our Indians hold it as a singular beauty to have no hair except on their heads only; and that if any happens sometimes to grow on their chin they pluck it out immediately: that the Europeans when they first saw them, appeared hideous to them on account of their long <sup>[92]</sup> beards which it was then the fashion to wear; that they did not like our white colour; and that the flesh of the French and English seemed of a disagreeable taste to them, because of its saltness. Thus, Madam, the idea which was formerly entertained in Europe of the Indians, who were represented there like men all covered with hair, not only differs from the truth in every particular, but is also precisely the same which they at first entertained of us, as they believed that our bodies were as hairy all over as the chin and breast of some persons.

*I have the honour to be, &c.*

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## LETTER TWENTY-SECOND.

*Voyage to the River St. Joseph. Observations with respect to the Rivers which fall into Lake Michigan on the eastern Side. Of Father Marquette's river, and of the Origin of this Name. Of the Games of the Indians. Some particulars of the Character of these Nations.*

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RIVER ST. JOSEPH, August 16, 1721.

M A D A M ,

**I**T was eight days yesterday since I arrived at this post, where we have a mission, and where there is a commandant with a small garrison.<sup>1</sup> The commandant's house, which is but a very sorry one, is called the fort, from its being surrounded with an indifferent pallisado, which is pretty near the case in all the rest, except the forts Chambly and Catarocoüy, which are real fortresses. There are however in almost every one of them some few cannons or patereroes,<sup>2</sup> which in case of necessity are sufficient to hinder a surprize and to keep the Indians in respect.

[94] We have here two villages of Indians, one of the Miamis and the other of the Poutewatamies, both of them

<sup>1</sup>The commandant at this time was Sieur de Montmidy, ensign in the colonial army.

<sup>2</sup>A paterero is a piece of ordnance used to hurl stones or nails; it is usually called pedrero.

mostly

mostly Christians; but as they have been for a long time without any pastors, the missionary who has lately been sent them, will have no small difficulty in bringing them back to the exercise of their religion.<sup>3</sup> The river of St. Joseph comes from the south-east, and discharges itself into the bottom of lake Michigan, the eastern shore of which is a hundred leagues in length, and which you are obliged to sail along before you come to the entry of this river. You afterward sail up twenty leagues in it before you reach the fort, which navigation requires great precautions; because when the wind is large, that is to say westerly, which frequently prevails here, the waves extend the whole length of the lake. There is also good ground to believe, that the great number of rivers which discharge themselves into the lake on the eastern side, contribute much by the shock of their currents against the waves to render this voyage dangerous: what is certain is, that there are few places in all Canada where there are more shipwrecks. But I return to my journal where I left off.

On the first of August, after having crossed under sail a bay which is thirty leagues in depth,<sup>4</sup> I left on my right *les isles de Castor*, or Beaver islands, which seem to me very well wooded; and some leagues farther on the left, I perceived on a sandy eminence a kind of grove or thicket, which when you are abreast of it, has the figure of an animal lying down: the French call this the Sleeping, and the

<sup>3</sup>This mission was founded by Father Claude Allouez, the apostle of the Ottawa country. Therein he died in 1689; he was succeeded by Claude Aveneau, who died in 1711. It is not known that there was any missionary at St. Joseph until Father Jean Baptiste St. Pé was sent there, shortly before Charlevoix's visit. He officiated until 1735, when he went to Mackinac; he was superior of Canadian missions from 1739 to 1748, and again in 1754.

<sup>4</sup>Little Traverse Bay of Emmet County, Michigan. On its southern coast is a county named for Charlevoix.

Indians the Couching Bear.<sup>5</sup> I advanced twenty leagues this day; and encamped in a little island, which lies in 44 deg. 30 min. north latitude, being nearly under the same parallel with Montreal.<sup>6</sup> From the entry of the lake Michigan as far as this island, the coast is very sandy; but after you have got ever so small a distance up the country it appears extremely beautiful, at least if we may judge of it by the magnificent forests with which it is covered. It is besides extremely well watered and we made not a single league without discovering either some large rivulet or fine river; and the more you advance to the south the larger the rivers, and they likewise come from a greater distance, the peninsula which separates lake Michigan from lake Huron, growing broader in proportion as you advance towards the south. Most part however of these rivers are but of an indifferent breadth, and have no great depth at their mouth. There is one singular circumstance attends them which is, that almost immediately after you have entered them, you meet with lakes of two, three, or four leagues in circuit; which comes no doubt from the great quantity of sand which they carry down with them; these sands being driven back by the waves of the lake, which come almost constantly from the west, gather in heaps at the mouth of the rivers, the waters of which are stopt by these dykes which they with difficulty get past, and so by degrees hollow out these lakes or pools, which hinder the country from being laid under water, on the melting of the snows.

On the 3d I entered the river of *Father Marquette*, in order to examine whether what I had been told of it was

<sup>5</sup>Sleeping Bear promontory is south of Grand Traverse Bay in Leelanau County, Michigan.

<sup>6</sup>Probably one of the Manitou Islands, although the southern one is at 45 degrees latitude. Charlevoix's observations of latitude are not to be depended upon.

true.

true.<sup>7</sup> This is at first entering it, no more than a brook; but fifteen paces higher you enter a lake which is near two leagues in circuit. In order to make way for its discharge into lake Michigan one would imagine that a great Hummock which you leave on the left as you enter, had <sup>1961</sup> been dug through; and on the right the coast is very low for the space of a good musket-shot, afterwards all of a sudden it rises to a very great height. It had actually been represented to me as such, and on that head, the following is the constant tradition of all our travellers, and what ancient missionaries have told me.

Father Joseph Marquette, a native of Laon in Picardy, where his family still maintains a distinguished rank, was one of the most illustrious missionaries of New-France. This person travelled over almost all the countries in it, and made several important discoveries, the last of which was that of the Mississippi, which he entered with the Sieur Joliet in 1673. Two years after this discovery, an account of which he has published, as he was going from Chicagou, which is at the bottom of lake Michigan, to Michillimakinac, he entered on the 18th day of May 1675 the river in question, the mouth of which was then at the extremity of the low ground, which as I have already taken notice, you leave on the right hand as you enter. Here he erected his altar and said mass. He went afterwards to a small distance in order to render thanks, and begged the two men that conducted his canoe to leave him alone for half an hour. This time having past they went to seek him, and were surprized to find him dead;<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Père Marquette River, in Mason County, Michigan.

<sup>8</sup>For Marquette's journals see Kellogg, *Early Narratives*, 223-280. Father Dablon's contemporary account of the missionary's last hours differs from Charlevoix's description. According to the former (*op. cit.* 274-276) his two companions were with him at his demise. These two faithful voyageurs were Pierre Porteret and Jacques Largilliers. Marquette was but thirty-eight at the time of his death. The text erroneously gives his name as Joseph; it should be Jacques.

they



they called to mind however, that on entering the river he had let drop an expression that he should end his days at this place.

However, as it was too far to carry his body from thence to Michillimakinac, they buried him near the bank of the river, which from that time has retired by degrees, as out of respect to his re-<sup>[97]</sup> mains, as far as the cape, the foot of which it now washes, and where it has opened itself a new passage. The year following, one of the persons who had paid the last offices to this servant of God, returned to the place where they had buried him, took what remained of him, and carried it to Michillimakinac.<sup>9</sup> I have not been able to learn, or else I have forgot, the name this river formerly bore: but at this day the Indians always call it the river of the black robe, for thus the Indians term the Jesuits. They call the secular clergy *White-bands* as they do the Recollects *Grey-gowns*. The French call this river Father Marquette's river, and never fail to call upon him when they are in any danger on lake Michigan. Several of them have affirmed, that they believed themselves indebted to his intercession for having escaped very great dangers.

I advanced three leagues farther that day, and pitched my camp at the mouth of the river St. Nicholas, on the banks of a fine lake, longer but not quite so broad as the former.<sup>10</sup> I found here great numbers of red and white pines, the latter of which have the roughest bark, but the wood of them is the better of the two, and from it issues a

<sup>9</sup>According to Dablon it was Marquette's neophytes, the Kiskakon Ottawa, who two years after his death bore his remains to St. Ignace. In 1877 a birch-bark box was found at this site, which, it is believed, contained the bones of Marquette. A portion of these relics is now at Marquette College, Milwaukee.

<sup>10</sup>St. Nicolas must be either Pentwater River in Oceana County or White River in Muskegon County. At the mouth of the latter is a lovely small lake.

gum of tolerable fineness; the former have a smother bark but the wood is heavier: from these is drawn the tar of which is made the best sort of pitch. I had a pleasant enough voyage as far as the river St. Joseph, which I entered very late on the 6th or very early on the 7th, for it was about midnight when we arrived at this place; having taken two full hours rest on the banks of the lake of the Black River, which is eight leagues distant from it,<sup>11</sup> and where there grows much of the root called gingseng.

[98] The river of St. Joseph has more than an hundred leagues of course, its source being at no great distance from lake Erie; it is navigable for four-score leagues, and on the 25th as I was sailing up towards the fort,<sup>12</sup> I saw nothing but excellent lands covered with trees of a prodigious height, under which there grows in some places very fine capillaire. I was two days in getting hither, but on the evening of the first day I run a very great risque of putting an end to all my travels; I was taken for a bear, and had very near been killed on this footing by one of my conductors: it happened in this manner.

After supper and prayers were over, it being very hot, I went to take a walk along the banks of the river. A spaniel which followed me wherever I went, happened to plunge into the water in quest of something I had thrown into it without thinking; my people who believed me retired to rest, and the more so as it was very late and the night dark, hearing the noise this creature made, took it

<sup>11</sup> Now Black Creek, discharging into the lake in Van Buren County; at its entrance stands South Haven.

<sup>12</sup> Fort St. Joseph stood south of the site of the present Niles, Michigan, near the boundary between that state and Indiana. A fort was built in 1679 by La Salle at the mouth of the St. Joseph. The fort which Charlevoix mentions, however, was not begun until a few years before his time. It was maintained during the French régime and taken over by the British. It was captured by a Spanish expedition in 1781, and apparently never again regarrisoned.

into

into their head, that it was a roebuck swimming across the river, two of them immediately set out with their muskets loaded; by good luck for me, one of the two who was a hair-brained fellow was called back by the rest for fear he should cause them miss their prey, but his hair-brainedness might very easily have caused him not to miss me.

The other advancing slowly perceived me at the distance of twenty paces from him, and made no doubt that it was a bear standing on its hind legs, as these animals always do on their hearing any noise. With this notion the huntsman cocks his piece in which he had put three balls, and <sup>199</sup> couching close to the ground, approached me as softly as possible. He was just going to fire, when I likewise began to think I saw somewhat, but without being able to distinguish what it was. As I could not doubt however that this must be some of my people I asked him whether he took me for a bear; he made no answer, and when I came up to him I found him quite speechless, and like a person seized with horror at the thoughts of what he was going to do. His comrades afterwards told me all that had happened.

The river St. Joseph is so commodious for the commerce of all parts of Canada, that it is no wonder it has always been much frequented by the Indians. Besides its waters an extreme fertile country, but this is not what these people esteem it most for. It is even great pity to give them good lands; which they either make no use of at all, or soon run out by sowing maize on them. The Mascoutins had not long since a settlement on this river, but have returned back to their own country which is said to be still finer than this.<sup>13</sup> The Poutewatamies have occu-

<sup>13</sup>When the Mascouten were first met by the French they dwelt on upper Fox River, in Wisconsin, near Berlin. About 1680 they began to migrate southward and eastward, staying awhile at St. Joseph; they thence removed to the Wabash, which was where they dwelt at the time of Charlevoix's visit.

pied successively several posts here where they still are; their village is on the same side with the fort, a little below it and on a very fine spot of ground: that of the Miamis is on the other side of the river.

These Indians, who have from the earliest times applied themselves more than others to the study of medicine, make great account of the root gingseng, and are persuaded that this plant has the virtue of rendering women fruitful. I do not believe however that it is for this reason they have given it the name of *Abesoatchenza* which signifies a child; it owes this name at least amongst the <sup>[100]</sup> Iroquois to the figure of its root. Your Grace has no doubt seen what Father Lafitau who first brought it into France, has written of it under the name *Aureliana Canadensis*: it is at least in shape exactly the same with that which comes from China, and which the Chinese bring from Corea and Tartary.<sup>14</sup> The name they give it, and which signifies the *likeness of man*; the virtues attributed to it, and which have been experienced in Canada by such as have used it, and the conformity of the climate<sup>15</sup> are a strong presumption that did we only believe it to come from China, it would be as much esteemed as that which the Chinese sell us. And perhaps too it owes its little credit amongst us, to its growing in a country which belongs to us, and that it wants the advantage of being in every respect a foreign commodity.

<sup>14</sup>Father Joseph François Lafitau was a missionary in Canada from 1711 to 1717. Upon his return to France he published an account of his discovery of ginseng under the title Charlevoix cites. This root had not before this been known to grow elsewhere than in the Orient. The American species is now known as *Panax quinquefolia*. It is widely diffused in the north temperate zone.

<sup>15</sup>The black river is in 41 deg. 50 min. that is the same latitude with the place whence the gingseng of Corea is brought for the use of the emperor of China. Some of it has been sent to China, and after being prepared by the Chinese, has been by them sold as coming from Corea or Tartary. Besides, this preparation adds nothing to its value.—CHARLEVOIX.

Sailing up the river St. Joseph I remarked some trees which I had not seen any where else. The most singular of these, and which I at first took for an ash by its leaves, grows to an extreme thickness, and bears a sort of bean very beautiful to the eye, but which by being boiled become always harder and harder, so that it has been impossible to make any use of them.<sup>16</sup> The fields round the fort are covered with sassafras to such a degree, that the air is perfumed with them. This is not a large tree as in Carolina but a small shrub creeping almost on the ground, and perhaps these are only the shoots of the trees which have been cut down in order to clear the ground round the fort and Indian towns.

[101] Here are a great number of simples which the Indians are said to use at a venture, without any other principle than a few slight experiments, which lead them sometimes into considerable mistakes: for the same remedies do not always act in the same manner on every constitution, even when affected with the same distemper; but these people are incapable of making such distinctions. There is one thing which has always surprized me, and that is the impenetrable secrecy which they observe with respect to their simples, or the little curiosity of the French to acquire the knowledge of them. If this be not the fault of these latter, nothing can, in my opinion, be a stronger proof, that the Indians do not behold us with pleasure in their country: but of this we have other proofs and equally undoubted. It may also be, that they entertain the same opinion with regard to their simples, which we are assured they hold with respect to their mines; which is that they would certainly die, were they to discover any of them to strangers.

<sup>16</sup> Probably the mountain ash tree (*Sorbus americanus*).



The Indians of these parts are naturally thieves, and look upon all they can catch as lawful prize. It is however true, that if one discovers early that he has lost any thing, it is sufficient to advertise the chief of it, and you are sure of recovering it; but you must give this chief more than the value of the thing, besides which, he always demands something for him who has found it, who is probably the thief himself. I was in the same case on the morrow after my arrival, in which I had not the least favour or indulgence shown me: these barbarians will rather maintain a war than relax ever so little in this point.

[102] Some days afterwards I paid a visit to the chief of the Miamis, who had been beforehand with me; this is a tall handsome man but very much disfigured, being without a nose; I was told that he owed this misfortune to a debauch. As soon as he understood I was coming to visit him, he went and placed himself in the inner part of his cabbin in a sort of alcove, where I found him seated cross-legged in the manner of the orientals. He said scarce any thing to me, and seemed to affect a haughty sort of gravity, which he supported very ill; this is the first Indian chief I have ever seen to observe this ceremony; but I was told that I must repay him in kind, if I would not be despised by him.<sup>17</sup>

On this day the Poutewatamies came to play at the game of straws, against the Miamis; the game was played in the cabbin of the chief, and in a sort of square over against it. These straws are small rushes of the thickness of a stalk of wheat and two fingers in length. They take up a parcel of these in their hand, which generally consists of two hundred and one, and always of an unequal

<sup>17</sup>The chieftainship among the Miami was attended with greater powers, and with more ceremonious observances than among any of the other northwestern tribes.

number. After they have well stirred them, and making a thousand contortions of body and invoking the genii, they divide them, with a kind of awl or sharp bone into parcels of ten: each takes one at a venture, and he to whom the parcel with eleven in it falls gains a certain number of points according to the agreement: sixty or four score make a party.

There are other ways of playing this game, and they would have explained them to me, but I could understand nothing of the matter, except that the number nine gained the whole party. They also <sup>[103]</sup> told me, that there was as much of art as chance in this game, and that the Indians are great cheats at it, as well as at all others; that they are so eager at it, as to spend whole days and nights at it; and that sometimes they do not give over playing till they have stript themselves naked and have nothing more to lose. They have another kind of game, which excites no strong desire of gain. This is for pure diversion only, but is almost always attended with fatal consequences with respect to their morals. At night fall several posts are erected, in a round form, in the middle of some great cabin; in the midst of all are the instruments, on each post is fixed a packet of down, of which there must be some of every colour. The young people of both sexes promiscuously dance round the posts, the girls having also some down of the colour which they love: from time to time a young man goes out from the rest, and takes from a post some down, of the colour which he knows is agreeable to his mistress, places it upon her head, dances round her, and by a certain signal gives her to understand some place of assignation. The dance ended, the feast begins and lasts the whole day long, in the evening all the company retire, when the girls manage matters with so much address,

address, that in spite of the vigilance of their mothers they reach the place of rendezvous.

The Miamis have also two other games, the first of which is called the game of the cross.<sup>18</sup> This is played with a ball and crooked sticks, ending like a sort of racket. Two posts are erected which serve as limits, and which are distant from each other in proportion to the number of the players. As for instance, if there are fourscore players, [104] the distance between the posts is half a league. The players are divided into two companies who have each their own post, and the business is to toss the ball to that of the opposite party, without suffering it to fall to the ground or without touching it with the hand; for if either happen the party is lost; at least except he who is in the fault can repair it, by driving the ball to the end with one single stroke, which is often impossible. These Indians are so dexterous at catching the ball with their crossees, that sometimes a party lasts several days running.

The second game is pretty much like this, but not so dangerous. Two boundaries are marked out as in the first, and the players occupy all the space which is between the two. He who is to begin tosses a ball up into the air, as nearly perpendicular as possible, to the end he may catch it again with the greater ease, in order to throw it towards the boundary. All the rest stand ready with their hands lifted, and he who catches the ball either performs the same thing, or throws it to some one of his own company, whom he judges more alert and dexterous than himself; for in order to win the party the ball must never be suffered to fall into the hands of any of the adversaries, before it reaches the boundary. The women also play at this game,

<sup>18</sup>This was the game of *la crosse*, which as modified by white men has become the national game of Canada.

but

but this rarely happens; their companies consist of four or five, and the first who lets fall the ball loses the party.

The Poutewatamies have here a chief and an orator, who are persons of worth. The first who is called Piremon is upwards of sixty, very prudent in his conduct, and capable of giving very good advice; the second whose name is Wilamek is <sup>[105]</sup> somewhat younger; this person is a Christian and well instructed, but makes no exercise of his religion.<sup>19</sup> One day as I reproached him for it, he left me abruptly, went directly to the chapel, and said his prayers with so audible a voice, that we could hear him at the missionary's. You can scarce any where meet with a more sensible man or a better speaker; and besides he is of a very amiable character and sincerely attached to the French. Piremon is no less so, and I heard both of them speak in a council held at the commandant's where they said a great many very fine things to us.

Several Indians of the two nations settled upon this river, are just arrived from the English colonies, whither they had been to sell their furs, and from whence they have brought back in return a great quantity of spirituous liquors.<sup>20</sup> The distribution of it is made in the usual manner; that is to say, a certain number of persons have daily delivered to each of them a quantity sufficient to get drunk with, so that the whole has been drank up in eight days. They began to drink in both villages, as soon as the

<sup>19</sup>The first of these chiefs is usually known as Pilemon; he visited Montreal in the summer of 1721. *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, xvi, 398; see also xvii, 365, 393, 394, 396, 398 for a son of the same name. Wilamex or Oulamex is mentioned in *N. Y. Colon. Docs.*, ix, 646; and *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, xvi, 301, 397; xvii, 33, 396.

<sup>20</sup>The Western Indians traded with the English at Albany and Philadelphia because their goods were cheaper, and in particular because from them they obtained rum which was more intoxicating than the French brandy (*eau de vie*). The French governors were constantly struggling to break up this English trade, which the Iroquois secretly encouraged.

sun was down, and every night the fields echoed with the most hideous howlings. One would have thought that a gang of devils had broke loose from hell, or that the two towns had been cutting one another's throats. There were two men maimed, one of whom I met, who had broke his arm with a fall; I told him he would certainly take care to keep sober another time: he answered, that what had happened was nothing at all; and that he should very soon be well again, and would fall to drinking as soon as he could get wherewithal.

[106] Your Grace may from thence judge, what a missionary is capable of doing in midst of this disorder, and how disagreeable it must be to a good man, who has in a manner exiled himself, in order to gain souls to God, to be obliged to become a witness of it, without being able to remedy it. These barbarians themselves well know, that drunkenness is their ruin and destruction; but when one goes about to persuade them, that they ought of themselves to request that no more of this destructive beverage should be sold them, they answer you coolly: "It is you who have accustomed us to it, we are now no longer able to dispense with the want of it, and should you refuse to give us any, we should certainly go to the English for it. This liquor kills and destroys us we confess, but it is to you we owe this mischief which is now past remedy." It is, however, without just grounds that they blame us alone; for had it not been for the English, I do believe it possible to have put an end to this commerce in the colony, or at least to have reduced it to its just limits; it will perhaps very soon be necessary to permit the French to carry on this traffick, taking the proper measures to hinder the abuse of it; and the more, as the English spirituous liquors are much more mischievous than ours.

A disorder



A disorder which attacks the morals never goes alone; it is always either the cause or the effect of several others. The Indians before they fell into this vice, if we except war which they have always carried on in a barbarous and inhuman manner, had nothing to trouble their happiness; drunkenness has rendered them interested, and has destroyed all the sweets, whether of domestick and publick <sup>[107]</sup> life. However, as they are only affected with the present object, the evils which this passion has occasioned are not yet become habitual; these are storms which soon blow over, and whereof the good-nature and tranquillity of mind they are endowed with, take away almost the very remembrance.

It must be confessed that their way of life seems at first glance very rude, but besides that nothing is hard in this respect but by comparison, and that habit is a second nature, the liberty they enjoy, compensates sufficiently the loss of those conveniencies of which they are deprived. What we see every day in some who are beggars by profession, and in some peasants, furnishes a sensible proof, that happiness may be found even in the bosom of indigence. Now the Indians are still more really so; first, because they believe themselves so; in the second place, as being in peaceable possession of the most invaluable gift of nature; lastly, from their being utterly ignorant of, and without so much as the desire of knowing those false goods which we so much admire, which we purchase at the expence of real ones, and which we so little enjoy.

In fact a thing in which they are more estimable and ought to be looked upon as true philosophers is, that the sight of all our conveniencies, riches, and magnificence affects them so little, and that they have found out the art of easily dispensing with them. Some Iroquois who  
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went to Paris in 1666, and who after being shown all the royal houses, and all the fine things of that great city, admired nothing in it; and would have preferred their villages to the capital of the most flourishing <sup>[108]</sup> kingdom in Europe, had they not seen the street De la Huchette, where the cook's shops, in which they found a constant supply of all sorts of eatables, pleased them highly.

Nor can we in justice say, that what makes them so fond of their own way of living is their not being acquainted with the charms of ours. A good number of Frenchmen have tried their way of life, and were so pleased with it, that several of them, though they could have lived very comfortably in the colony, could never be prevailed upon to return to it; on the contrary, there never was so much as a single Indian that could be brought to relish our way of living. Children have been taken even in their swaddling clothes, and have been brought up with a great deal of care; nothing has been omitted to hinder them from the knowledge of what might pass at home with their parents: all these precautions have been fruitless, the force of blood having ever got the better of education: the moment they have found themselves at liberty, they have torn their clothes to pieces, and have gone across the woods in quest of their countrymen, whose way of living seemed preferable to ours.

An Iroquois called La Plaque,<sup>21</sup> and the same person, who by saving his father's life at an engagement, thought himself freed from all obligations to him, lived among the French for several years. He was even made a lieutenant in our army, in order to induce him to remain with us, as

<sup>21</sup> La Plaque was a Mohawk who for some time was chief of the mission village at Sault St. Louis. In 1691 he visited France, and upon his return led war parties against the English frontier. See *N. Y. Colon. Docs.*, ix, *passim*.

he was a very brave man. He could not however hold out, and returned to his own nation, carrying away with him only our vices, <sup>[109]</sup> without correcting any of those he had brought along with him. He was fond of women to distraction. He was handsome, and his bravery and his warlike feats, made him much taken notice of, he had also a sprightly wit, and was of a very engaging behaviour; he debauched many of his countrywomen, and carried his irregularities to such a height, that it was debated in the council of his own canton, whether they should not dispatch him. It was however carried by a plurality of voices that he should be suffered to live; because that being of distinguished valour, he would people the country with excellent warriors.

The care which the mothers take of their children, whilst they are still in the cradle is beyond all expression, and proves in a very sensible manner, that we often spoil all, by the reflections which we add to the dictates of simple nature. They never leave them, they carry them every where about with them; and even when they are ready to sink under the burthen with which they load themselves, the cradle of the child is held for nothing: and one would even think, that this additional weight were an ease to them and rendered them more agile.

Nothing can be neater than these cradles in which the child lies as commodiously and softly as possible. But the infant is only made fast from the middle downwards: so that when the cradle is upright, the little creatures have their head and the half of the body hanging down; we Europeans would imagine, that a child left in this condition would become entirely decrepit; <sup>[110]</sup> but quite the contrary happens, this posture rendering the body supple; and they are in fact of a port and stature, which the handsomest

somest among us might look upon with envy. What can we oppose to so general an experience? But what I am going to tell you is not so easily justified.

There are nations in this continent called flatheads, and which have, in fact, their fore-head very flat, and the crown of their head somewhat raised. This conformation is not the work of nature but of their mothers, who give it to their children gradually from their birth.<sup>22</sup> In order to this, they apply upon the forehead and back part of the head, two masses of clay or of some other heavy matter, which they press together by degrees, till the cranium has taken the form they have a mind to give it. It appears that this operation causes the children to suffer a great deal, as there is a thick and a whitish matter which proceeds from their nostrils: but neither this circumstance nor the cries of the little innocents alarm the mothers, who are above all things desirous of procuring them this point of beauty which they conceive indispensably necessary. Quite the contrary happens among certain Algonquins, whom we have thought fit to call *Têtes de Boule*, or Roundheads, and of whom I have already taken notice, they making their chief beauty to consist in having heads perfectly round, and the mothers likewise begin very early to give them this form. I was willing, Madam, to make use of the leisure my stay in this place affords me, which will perhaps be longer than I am desirous <sup>[111]</sup> it should be, in order to finish all I had to say on this subject, but some unexpected difficulties and the sudden departure of a traveller, who is returning to the colony, oblige me to interrupt this account which I shall resume as soon as possible.

*I am, &c.*

<sup>22</sup> This custom of flattening children's heads prevailed among the Catawba and the Choctaw, whence it spread to the Natchez and other southern tribes.

## LETTER TWENTY-THIRD.

*Sequel of the Character of the Indians and of their Manner of living.*

RIVER ST. JOSEPH, August 8, 1721.

MADAM,

I RESUME the sequel of my memoirs where I left off. You may perhaps find fault with me for my want of order, but one may at least pardon in a relation what is admired in an ode; that which in a lyric poet is the effect of art, is the effect of necessity in a traveller, who can only relate things in proportion as he is informed of them, and who is obliged to write what is then passing before his eyes for fear of forgetting it. The children of the Indians after leaving off the use of the cradle, are under no sort of confinement, and as soon as they are able to crawl about on hands and feet, are suffered to go stark naked wherever they have a mind, through woods, water, mire and snow; which gives them strength and agility, and fortifies them against the injuries of the air and weather; but this conduct, as I have already remarked, occasions weaknesses in the stomach and breast, which destroy their constitution very early. In the summer time they run the moment <sup>[114]</sup> they get up to the next river or lake, where



where they remain a great part of the day playing, in the same manner we see fishes do in good weather, near the surface of the water. Nothing is more proper than this exercise to render the body active.

They take care likewise to put the bow and arrow into their hands betimes; and in order to excite in them that emulation which is the best mistress of the arts, there is no necessity of placing their breakfast on the top of a tree, as was formerly done to the Lacedemonian youth; they are all born with so strong a passion for glory, as to have no need of a spur; thus they shoot their arrows with wonderful exactness, and it scarce costs them any trouble to arrive at a like dexterity in the use of our fire-arms. They also cause them to wrestle together, and so keen are they in this exercise, that they would often kill one another, were they not separated in time; those who come off with the worst, are so mortified at it that they can never be at rest till they have had their revenge.

We may in general say, that fathers and mothers neglect nothing, in order to inspire their children with certain principles of honour which they preserve their whole lives, but which are often ill enough applied; and in this consists all the education that is given them. They take care always to communicate their instructions on this head, in an indirect manner. The most common way is by rehearsing to them the famous exploits of their ancestors or countrymen: the youth take fire at these recitals, and sigh for an opportunity of imitating what they have thus been made to admire. Sometimes in order to correct their faults they employ tears and entreaties, but never threats; these [115] would make no manner of impression on minds which have imbibed this prejudice, that no one whatever has a right to force them to any thing.

A mother

A mother on seeing her daughter behave ill bursts into tears; and upon the other's asking her the cause of it, all the answer she makes is, "Thou dishonourest me." It seldom happens that this sort of reproof fails of being efficacious. Notwithstanding, since they have had a more frequent commerce with the French, some of them begin to chastise their children, but this happens only among those that are Christians, or such as are settled in the colony. Generally the greatest punishment which the Indians make use of in chastising their children, is by throwing a little water in their face; the children are very sensible of this, and in general of every thing that looks like reproof, which is owing to this, that pride is the strongest passion at this age.

Young girls have been known to strangle themselves for a slight reprimand from their mothers, or for having a few drops of water thrown in their face, warning them of what was going to happen in such words as these, *You shall not have a daughter long to use so*. The greatest evil in this sort of education, is that what they exhort young people to is not alway virtue, or that what comes nearly to the same thing, that the ideas they give them of it are not just. In fact, nothing is so much instilled into them, whether by precept or example, as an implacable desire of revenge.

It would seem, Madam, that a childhood so ill instructed, should be followed by a very dissolute <sup>[116]</sup> and turbulent state of youth; but on one hand the Indians are naturally quiet and betimes masters of themselves, and are likewise more under the guidance of reason than other men; and on the other hand, their natural disposition, especially in the northern nations, does not incline them to debauchery. They however have some usages in which no sort of regard is paid to modesty; but it appears that in  
this,

this, superstition has a much greater share than a depravation of heart.

The Hurons when we first began to frequent them were more lascivious as well as more brutal in their pleasures. For young people of both sexes abandoned themselves, without either shame or remorse, to all kinds of dissoluteness, and it was chiefly amongst these that it was thought no crime in a girl to prostitute herself: their parents were the first to engage them in this vice, and husbands were seen to prostitute their wives for vile interest. Several of them never married, but took women to serve them to use their own expression as companions, and the only difference they reckoned between these concubines and their lawful spouses, was in their being free from any engagement with the former; besides, their children were on the same footing with the others, which occasioned no sort of inconvenience in a country where there was nothing to inherit.

The nations in these parts are not distinguished by their habit: the men in hot weather have often no garment, except a shirt: In winter they wear more or fewer cloaths, in proportion to the climate. They wear on their feet a sort of socks, made of deer-skin dried in the <sup>[117]</sup> smoke;<sup>1</sup> their hose are also of skins or pieces of stuff wrapped round the leg. A waistcoat of skins covers their bodies down to their middle, over which they wear a covering when they can get it; if not they wear a robe of bear-skin or of several skins of beavers, otters, or other such like furs, with the hairy side inwards. The woman's boddices reach down to a little above the knee, and when they travel they cover the head with their coverings or robes. I have

<sup>1</sup> Now called moccasins, a word of Algonquian origin, probably first Anglicized by the Virginia colonists. Each tribe had an especial form of ornament or shape; so that the moccasins proclaimed the tribal affinity. Even moccasin tracks indicated to the keenly observant Indians the tribal origin of the wearer.

seen several who wore little bonnets, made in the manner of leather caps; others of them wear a sort of cowl, which is sewed to their vests or boddices, and they have also a piece of stuff or skin which serves them for a petticoat, and which covers them from the middle down to the mid-leg.

They are all very fond of shirts, which they never wear under their vests till they become dirty, and never put them off, till they fall off with rottenness, they never giving themselves the trouble to wash them. Their tunicks or vests of skins, are commonly dried in the smoke like their socks, that is, they are suffered to be fully penetrated with it, when they rub them till they are capable of being washed like linnen. They also dress them by steeping them in water, and afterwards rub them between their hands till they become dry and pliant. They are, however, much fonder of our stuffs and coverings, which they esteem much more commodious.

Several of them paint themselves, as the Picts did formerly, over the whole body: others in some parts only. This is not considered by them as purely ornamental; they find it, likewise as is said, of great use to them: it contributes much to de-<sup>[118]</sup> fend them from the cold and wet, and saves them from the persecution of the gnats. It is however only in the countries occupied by the English, and especially in Virginia, that the custom of painting themselves all over is very common. In New-France most are satisfied with making a few figures of birds, serpents, or other animals, and even foliage or the like, without any order or symmetry, and often on the face, and sometimes on the eye-lids, according to the caprice of the person.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Color was an essential feature of the toilet, and the pictographs on the body were used to indicate tribal affinities, mourning, and often personal caprice. For an example see portrait of Kee-o-tuck in *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, xx, 366.



Many of the women too cause themselves to be painted over the jaw-bone, in order to prevent the tooth-ach.

This operation which is done by pricking the parts, is not painful in itself; it is done in this manner: they begin with tracing on the skin after it is well stretched, the figure they have a mind to paint on it. They afterwards prick with the bone of a fish or with needles, all these traces even till the blood comes, afterwards they rub it over with charcoal and other colours well pulverized. These powders insinuate themselves under the skin, so that the colours are never effaced. But in some time after the skin swells, when there arises a tetter accompanied with an inflammation: this is commonly followed by a fever, and if the weather proves hot, or if the operation has been pushed too far, the life of the patient is endangered.<sup>3</sup>

The colour with which they paint their faces, and the grease with which they rub the whole body, produce the same advantages, and in the opinion of the Indians, contribute as much to the beauty and comeliness of the person as the pricking. The warriors paint themselves when they take the field, in order to terrify the enemy, and perhaps too, with <sup>[119]</sup> a view to hide their own fear, for we must not believe them to be entirely exempt from it. Young persons do it, in order to conceal their youth, which makes them less esteemed by the old soldiers, or their paleness after some disease which they would be afraid would be taken for the effect of their want of courage. They do it likewise in order to improve their good looks; in which case the colours are more lively and in greater variety: they also paint the prisoners who are condemned to die, for what reason I know not; this is perhaps

<sup>3</sup>Tattooing was not as common as face and body painting. It was always conducted with great ceremony, and high honor was paid to the person who performed the rite.

done



done to adorn the victim who is about to be sacrificed to the god of war. Lastly, they paint dead persons and expose them covered with their finest robes, and this, no doubt, that they may conceal the dead paleness which disfigures them.

The colours made use of on these occasions are the same employed in dyeing their skins, and are drawn from certain earths and from the barks of trees. These are not very lively, but are very difficult to efface. The men add to these ornaments some down of swans or other birds, which they scatter over their hair, which is besmeared with fat, by way of powder. To this they add feathers of all colours, and tufts of hair of different animals, all placed in a very grotesque manner. The disposition of their hair sometimes bristling on one side and lying flat on the other or dressed in a thousand odd ways; with pendants in their ears and sometimes in their nostrils, a large shell of porcelain hanging from their neck or on their breast, crowns of feathers, with the claws, talons or heads of birds of prey, small deer horns; all these are so many essential articles in their dress. But whatever is of an extraordinary value, is always employed in adorning their captives when these wretches make <sup>[120]</sup> their first entry into the village of the conqueror. It is to be remarked, that the men take no care to adorn any part but the head. Quite the reverse happens with the women. They scarce use any dress on their heads at all; only they are very jealous of their hair and would think themselves dishonoured forever, were it to be cut. Thus, when at the death of their relations they cut off part of the hair, they pretend to shew by this act the most extreme grief they are capable of. In order to preserve this ornament of the head they rub it often with fat, powder it with the bark of a certain tree, and sometimes

times with vermillion, then wrap it in the skin of an eel or serpent, by way of locks, which are plaited in form of a chain, and which hang down to their middle. As to the face, they content themselves with drawing a few lines on it with vermillion or other colours.

Their nostrils are never bored,<sup>4</sup> and it is only among some nations that their ears are so. When this is the case, they insert in them, or hang to them, as well as the men, beads of porcelain. When they are in their finest dress they wear robes on which are painted all sorts of figures, small collars of porcelain, without any great order or symmetry, and a kind of border tolerably well worked with the hair of the porcupine, which they also paint with different colours. They adorn in the same manner their children's cradles, and over the extremity towards the head, they fix a semicircle or two of cedar, that they may cover the child without incommoding its head.

Besides, the care of household affairs and making the necessary provision of wood, the women are likewise alone charged with the culture of the fields; <sup>[121]</sup> as soon as the snows are melted and the water sufficiently drained off, they begin with preparing the ground, which is done by stirring it slightly with a crooked piece of wood, the handle of which is very long, after having set fire to the dried stalks of their maize and other herbs which have remained since the last harvest. Besides that, those sorts of grain which are cultivated by these people are all summer corn, they pretend that the nature of the soil of this country, will not permit them to sow any thing before the winter. But I believe that the true reason why corn would not

<sup>4</sup>Charlevoix here contradicts himself, since in the preceding paragraph he speaks of pendants in the nostrils. Nose-piercing was not common, however, and as a peculiarity gave its name to certain tribes. The Ottawa were called by their earliest visitors "Nez Percés."

sprout,

sprout, if it were to be sown in autumn, is either that it would spoil during the winter, or would rot on the melting of the snows. It may also be, and it is the opinion of several persons, that the corn which is sown in Canada, though originally come from France, has contracted, through length of time, the nature and properties of summer corn, which is not strong enough to sprout several times, as it happens to such sorts of grain as we sow in September and October.

Beans or rather Caravanches<sup>5</sup> are sown with maize, the stalk of which serves for a support to them; I think I remember to have been told, that it is from us the Indians received this sort of pulse, which they hold in great esteem, and which, in fact, differs nothing from ours. But what I am surprized at is, that they make little or no use of our peas, which have acquired in the soil of Canada a degree of excellence, much superior to what they have in Europe. Turnsoles, water melons, and pompions,<sup>6</sup> are first raised in a hot-bed and afterwards transplanted.

[122] The women commonly assist one another in their labour in the fields, and when reaping time comes, they have sometimes recourse to the men, who then condescend to put their hands to work. The whole concludes with a festival and with a feast, which is given in the night. Their corn and other fruits are preserved in repositories which they dig in the ground, and which are lined with large pieces of bark. Some of them leave the maize in the ear, which is tufted like our onions, and hang them on long poles over the entry of their cabbins. Others thresh it out and lay it up in large baskets of bark, bored on all sides to hinder it from heating. But when they are

<sup>5</sup>The old word for horse beans (*Faba vulgaris*).

<sup>6</sup>Turnsoles are sunflowers, turning with the sun. Pompions are gourds.

obliged to be from home for any time, or when they apprehend some irruption of the enemy, they make great concealments under ground, where these sorts of grain are exceeding well preserved.<sup>7</sup>

In the northern parts they sow little, and in several places none at all, but purchase maize by way of exchange for other commodities.<sup>8</sup> This sort of pulse is very wholesome, nourishing, and light upon the stomach. The way in which our French Canadian travellers commonly dress it, is to boil it a little in a sort of lye. In this state it keeps a long time; they commonly make their provision of it for long journeys, and compleat the dressing of it as they want it, by boiling it in water or in broth, if they can get any, with a little salt along with it.

This is no disagreeable eating, but many are of opinion, that the too constant use of it is prejudicial to the health, the lye giving it a corrosive quality, the effects of which become sensible after some time. When the Maize is in the ear and still green, some roast it on the coals, in which way it has an ex-<sup>[123]</sup>cellent flavour. They commonly regale strangers with this dish. They also send it in some places to persons of distinction who arrive in their village, much in the same manner as they present the freedom of a city in France.

Lastly, it is of this pulse the *Sagamity* is made, which is the most common food of the Indians. In order to this they begin with roasting it, they afterwards bruise it, separate it from the husk and then make it into a sort of pap,

<sup>7</sup>The process of making these hiding places for food was an interesting one. The white hunters soon learned it from the Indians, and adopted it to preserve furs as well as provisions. The hunters' term for these hiding places was "cache."

<sup>8</sup>Maize, now called Indian corn (*Zea mays*), is a native of North America, probably developed from grasses in Mexico or Guatemala. It was in almost universal use among the aborigines when the whites discovered America.

which

which is insipid when without meat or prunes to give it a relish. It is sometimes made into meal, called here *farine froide*, and is the most commodious and best provision for a journey; and such persons as walk on foot can carry no other. They also boil the maize in the ear whilst it is still tender, they afterwards roast it a little, then separate it from the ear and lay it to dry in the sun: this will keep a long time, and the sagamity made of it has an excellent flavour.

The detail of these dishes is a proof how little delicate the Indians are in their eating: we should also be of opinion that their taste is very much vitiated, were it possible to fix this point. They are above all things fond of fat, which when they can get, it is the reigning ingredient in all their cookery: some pounds of candles in a kettle of sagamity, makes an excellent dish with them; they even put things in it which I dare not mention; and at which they are surprized to see us shocked.

The southern nations had no kitchen utensils, but some vessels of earthen ware. In the north they made use of wooden kettles, and made the <sup>[124]</sup> water boil by throwing into it red hot pebbles. Our iron pots are esteemed by both as much more commodious than the others, and are the commodity you can promise most to dispose of quickly, in trading with Indians. Among the western nations they use wild oats instead of maize: this is likewise very wholesome, and if less nourishing, the hunting of the buffalo which is very plentiful in those parts, abundantly compensates that defect. Amongst the wandering Indians who never cultivate the ground, the sole resource when their hunting and fishing fall short, is in a kind of moss which grows on certain rocks, and which our Frenchmen call *Trippe de Roches*: nothing can be more insipid than  
this



this food, which is even very far from being substantial; and can at most keep one from dying of hunger. I am less still able to conceive what has, however, been attested by persons worthy of credit, that the Indians eat as a great dainty a kind of maize, which is laid to rot in standing water as we do hemp, and which is taken out quite black and stinking. They even add, that such as have once taken a liking to this strange dish, do not with their will lose any of the water or rather of the dirt that runs from it, and the smell of which alone, would be enough to turn the stomach of any other person. It is probably necessity alone which has discovered this secret, and if this does not likewise constitute all the seasoning to it, nothing can be a stronger proof that there is no disputing of tastes.

The Indian women make bread of maize, and though this is only a mass of ill kneaded paste, without leaven, and baked under the ashes, these people reckon it excellent, and regale their friends with it; but it must be eaten hot for it will not <sup>[125]</sup> keep cold; sometimes they mix beans, different fruits, oil and fat with it: one must have a good stomach to digest such dainties.

The Indians make no other use of the turnsoles, but to extract from them an oil with which they rub themselves: this is more commonly drawn from the seeds than from the root of this plant. This root differs little from what we call in France *topinambours* or apples of the earth. Potatoes so common in the islands and on the continent of South America, have been planted with success in Louisiana. The continual use which all the nations of Canada made of a kind of tobacco which grows all over this country, has given occasion to some travellers to say that they swallowed the smoke of it, which served them for food; but this has since been discovered to be a falsity, and to  
have

have no foundation, except from their having been observed to remain a long time without eating. After once tasting our tobacco they can no longer endure their own, and it is very easy to gratify them in this point, tobacco growing very well here, and it is even said, that by making a proper choice of the soil, we might raise a most excellent sort of it.<sup>9</sup>

The lesser occupations of the women and what is their common employment in their cabbins, are the making of thread from the interior pellicles of the bark of a tree, called white-wood,<sup>10</sup> which they manufacture nearly as we do hemp. The women too are their dyers: they work also at several things made of bark, and make small figures with the hair of the porcupine; they make small cups or other utensils of wood, they paint and em-<sup>[126]</sup>broider deer-skins, and they knit belts and garters with the wool of the buffalo.

As for the men they glory in their idleness, and actually spend more than half their lives in doing nothing, from a persuasion that daily labour degrades a man, and that it is only proper for women. The proper function of a man, say they, is to fish, hunt, and go to war. It is they, however, who are to make every thing necessary for these three exercises: thus the making of arms, nets, and all their hunting and fishing equipage as well as their canoes with their rigging, their racquets, or snow shoes, the building and repairing of their cabbins, are the office of the men, who notwithstanding on these occasions often make use of the assistance of the women. The Christians

<sup>9</sup> Tobacco is a native of America; the tribes of the Great Lakes used a species which they called "petun," later known as kinnikinnick. This was not true tobacco, but made from a mixture of herbs, sumac, dogwood, and cornel bark. The tribesmen preferred the Brazilian tobacco, which the French imported from South America.

<sup>10</sup> The basswood tree (*Tilia americana*).

are a little more industrious, but never work except by way of penance.

These people, before we provided them with hatchets and other instruments, were very much at a loss in felling their trees, and making them fit for the uses they intended them for. They burned them near the root, and in order to split and cut them into proper lengths, they made use of hatchets made of flint which never broke, but which required a prodigious time to sharpen. In order to fix them in a shaft, they cut off the top of a young tree, making a slit in it, as if they were going to graft it, into which slit they inserted the head of the axe. The tree growing together again in length of time, held the head of the hatchet so firm, that it was impossible for it to get loose: they then cut the tree at the length they judged sufficient for the handle.

[127] Their villages are generally of no regular form: most of our ancient accounts have represented them of a round figure, and perhaps the authors of them saw none but such as were so. In a word, imagine to yourself, Madam, a confused heap of cabbins placed without any order or design: some of them like cart houses, others like so many tubs, built of bark, supported by a few posts, and sometimes coarsely plastered on the outside with clay; and, in fact, built with much less art, neatness, and solidity than those of the beavers. These cabbins are from fifteen to twenty foot broad, and sometimes a hundred in length. In this case they have several fires, each fire serving for a space of thirty feet.

When the floor happens not to be large enough for bedding for all the persons in the family, the young folks have their beds on a kind of loft five or six feet from the ground, and which runs the whole length of the cabin;  
the

the household furniture and provisions are placed above that on shelves laid crossways next the roof. There is commonly before the entry, a sort of vestibule or lobby where the youth sleep in the summer-time, and which serves as a repository for wood in the winter. The doors are only so many pieces of bark, suspended from the top like the ports of a ship. These cabbins have neither chimnies nor windows, only there is left in the middle of the roof an aperture by which part of the smoke gets out, and which they are obliged to stop up, when it rains or snows, as also to put out the fire if they would not be blinded with smoke.

The Indians are more skilful in erecting their fortifications than in building their houses; here <sup>[128]</sup> you see villages surrounded with a good palisado, and with redoubts, and they are very careful to lay in a proper provision of water and stones. These palisadoes are double, and even sometimes treble, and have generally battlements on the outward circumvallation. The piles of which they are composed, are interwoven with branches of trees, without any void space between. This sort of fortification was sufficient to sustain a long siege whilst the Indians were ignorant of the use of fire-arms. Every village has a pretty large square, but these are seldom regular.

Formerly the Iroquois built their cabbins in a better manner than the other nations, and even than themselves do at this day; these were adorned with figures *in relievo*, but of very coarse workmanship; and as almost all their towns have been since burned in different expeditions, they have not taken the trouble to rebuild them with their former magnificence.<sup>11</sup> Notwithstanding, if these

<sup>11</sup> Probably Charlevoix has taken this description of painted reliefs in the Iroquois villages from the account of Father Jogues. See *Jesuit Relations*, xxii, 283.

nations are so little curious in procuring themselves the conveniencies of life, in the places of their ordinary residence, what may we think of their encampments on journeys, and in their wintering places? An ancient missionary, who in order to oblige himself to learn the language of the Montagnais, would needs follow them in one of their winter huntings, gives a description of them, which I am going to give you almost word for word.

These Indians inhabit a country extremely rude and uncultivated, but not quite so much so, as that which they make choice of to go a hunting in. You must travel a long way, before you arrive at it, and at the same time, carry on your back every <sup>[129]</sup> thing you may stand in need of for five or six months together, and that through ways sometimes so rugged and hideous, that it is even scarce possible to conceive how the very wild beasts themselves are able to pass them; and were you not to have the foresight to provide yourself in pieces of bark, you must be destitute of all means of sheltering yourself from the rain and snow, during your journey. After arriving at the end of it, you find yourself a little better accommodated, that is to say, you are not eternally exposed to all the injuries of the air and weather.

Every body falls to work for this purpose, and the missionaries themselves, who in the beginning had no body to wait on them, and for whom the Indians had no manner of consideration, were no more spared than the rest, and had not so much as a cabbin allowed them to themselves, but were obliged to take up their lodgings in the first that made them welcome. These cabbins among most of the Algonquin nations are nearly in the form of our ice-houses, round and terminating in a cone. These had no other supports than poles fixed in the snow, and tied together



gether by the ends, and which were covered with pieces of bark very ill joined, and secured so that the wind easily found admittance on all sides.

The building of such a house employs half an hour at most, some branches of pine serving as mattresses, which are also the only beds in those palaces. There is one, and almost the only conveniency which attends them, and that is that you may change them every day: they likewise collect the snow quite round them, which forms a kind of parapet, which has its use, as it is impenetrable to <sup>[130]</sup> the wind. Under shelter of this parapet, they sleep as tranquilly on these branches, covered with a wretched coverlet of skin, as in the best bed in the world; it is true the missionaries had much difficulty to accustom themselves to this way of life, but fatigue and necessity soon compelled them to it. The case is not entirely the same with respect to the smoke, which almost continually fills the upper part of the cabbin in such a manner, that one cannot stand upright in it, without having one's head in a thick cloud of it. This is no manner of grievance to an Indian who is from his infancy accustomed to sit or lie, all the time they are within doors; but it is really a severe punishment to a Frenchman, who cannot bear such a state of inaction.<sup>12</sup>

Besides the wind, which as I have already remarked, enters on all sides, blows with such a piercing cold, that one side freezes whilst you are choaked and roasted on the other. And often you cannot see two or three feet from you, you weep almost your eyes out, and sometimes you are obliged to lie flat on your face, and almost with your mouth close to the ground, to fetch a little breath: the

<sup>12</sup> All white dwellers in Indian cabins, complain of the smoke; it frequently affected the eyes and made persons temporarily blind.

shortest way would be to go out, but for most of the time this is impossible; sometimes because it snows so thick as to darken the day, and at other times on account of a wind so piercing that it almost peels the skin off one's face, and splits the trees in the forests. Notwithstanding a missionary is obliged to say his office, to celebrate mass, and to perform all the other functions of his ministry. To all these inconveniencies we must add one more, which though it may appear very small at first, is really very considerable, and <sup>[131]</sup> this is being persecuted by the dogs. The Indians have always a great number of these animals which follow them every where, and are remarkable for their fidelity; not very fawning indeed as they are never caressed by their masters, but bold and good hunters: I have already said that they are trained up betimes for the different chaces, for which they are intended; and I may add, that every Indian must have a considerable number of them, as many of them perish by the teeth and horns of wild beasts, which they attack with a courage that nothing is capable of shaking. Their masters are at very little pains in feeding them, so that they are obliged to live upon what they can catch, and as this goes no great way with them, it is no wonder they are very meagre and thin of flesh; besides they have very little hair, which renders them very sensible to the cold.

In order to defend themselves from it, if they cannot get near the fire, which it would be difficult for all of them to do, even were there nobody in the cabbins, they lye down on the first person they meet, and one is often suddenly awakened in the night, almost choaked with two or three dogs upon him. Were they a little more discreet in chusing their place, their company would not be extremely troublesome, and one might put up with them pretty well;

well; but they lay themselves down where they can, and it is in vain to drive them away for they return the instant after. It is still worse in the day time; as soon as any thing eatable appears, you cannot imagine what leaps they make to snatch it out of your hands. Imagine to yourself the case of a poor missionary crouching near the fire, to say his breviary or read some book, striving with the smoke and exposed to the im-<sup>[132]</sup>portunity of a dozen curs, who leap backwards and forwards over him, in order to snatch some morsel they may have seen. If he stands in need of a little rest, he is scarce able to find a corner where he can be free from this vexation. If any thing is brought him to eat, the dogs have that moment their snout in the dish before he tastes it, and often whilst he is defending his portion against those which attack him in front, another comes upon him from the rear, and either carries off half his allowance or justles against him, so that the plate falls from his hands, and the sagamity is tumbled amongst the ashes.

It often happens that the evils I have been speaking of, are effaced by a much greater, and in comparison of which, all the rest are as nothing; this is famine. The provisions they bring with them last them no great while, and they reckon upon a supply from their hunting, which does not always afford it. It is true Indians know how to endure hunger, with a patience equal to the little care they take to provide against it; but they are sometimes reduced to such extremities that they perish under them. The missionary, from whom I have drawn this detail, was obliged in his first wintering to eat the skins of eels and of elks, with which he had patched his cassock; after which he was forced to feed upon young branches, and the tenderest part of the bark of trees. He underwent however this severe

vere tryal, without the least detriment to his health, but every one is not endowed with so vigorous a constitution.<sup>13</sup>

The nastiness of these cabbins alone, and that infection which is a necessary consequence of it, are to any other but an Indian a real punishment. <sup>[133]</sup> It is easy to judge to what a height, both the one and the other must arrive amongst persons who never change their cloaths, till they fall to pieces of themselves, and who take no care to keep them clean. In summer they bathe themselves every day, but immediately afterwards they rub themselves with oil and grease of a very rank smell. In the winter they remain in their fat, and during all that season it is impossible to enter their cabbins without being poisoned with the stench.

Not only every thing they eat is ill-seasoned and commonly very insipid, but there prevails in all their repasts an uncleanness, which passes all conception: what I have myself seen, as well as what I have been told of it, would strike you with horror. There are very few animals which do not feed cleaner, and after seeing what passes amongst these people in this respect, there is no room to doubt, that the imagination contributes greatly to our repugnancies; and that many of those things which are really prejudicial to our health, are only so by means of those very repugnancies, and our want of courage in surmounting them.

It must however be granted, that things are somewhat changed with respect to all these points, since our arrival in this country; and I have even known some to endeavour to procure themselves conveniencies, with which they will probably very soon be scarce able to dispense. Some of them also begin to use more precaution than formerly,

<sup>13</sup> For this incident see *Jesuit Relations*, xxxix, 113.

to prevent their being unprovided, in case the hunting should happen to fail them; and amongst those who are settled in the colony, there requires but a very small addition to furnish out a tolerable share of the conveniencies of life. But what is <sup>[134]</sup> to be feared is, that after arriving at this point they will be tempted to go a great deal farther, and fall into such a luxury as may render them still more miserable, than they now are in the bosom of the most extreme indigence.

At least it will not be the fault of the missionaries if they are exposed to this danger; persuaded that it is morally impossible to arrive at that golden mean, without afterwards deviating from it, they have preferred sharing with these people whatever is most disagreeable in their manner of living, rather than to open their eyes to the means of finding any remedy for it. Thus those very persons who are every day witnesses of their sufferings, are at a loss to conceive how they are able to support them, and the more so as they are without the least relaxation, and as every season brings along with it some peculiar evil.

As their villages are always situated either near a wood, or on the banks of some lake or river, and oftener between both, as soon as the weather becomes warm the musketos, together with a prodigious army of other gnats, raise a persecution worse than that of the smoke, which you are often obliged to call to your assistance; there being scarce any other remedy against the bite of these insects, which set the whole body on fire and suffer you not to close your eyes. Add to this, the long and fatiguing journeys you are often forced to make with these barbarians, sometimes up to the middle in water, and sometimes to the knees in mire, through woods and among briars and  
thorns,



thorns, with the danger of losing one's eyes, in open fields where nothing defends you from the <sup>[135]</sup> burning heat of the sun in summer, and the piercing wind in winter.

If you travel in a canoe the confined posture you are obliged to sit in, and the apprehension occasioned at your first setting out, by the extreme fragility of this vehicle; the inaction you must of necessity be in, the slowness of your voyage, which is retarded by the least shower of rain, or gale of wind; the little society or conversation that can be had with persons who know nothing, who never open their mouths whilst they are employed, who poison you with their stench, and who fill you with vermin and nastiness; the caprice and rudeness you must put up with from them; the insults to which you are exposed from a drunkard, or a person whom any unforeseen accident, a dream or the remembrance of any thing disagreeable puts into an ill humour; the avarice natural to those barbarians at the sight of any thing they covet, and what has cost several missionaries their lives; and in case war happens to be declared between the nations, in whose territory you are, the danger you are constantly exposed to, either of being reduced to the most wretched slavery, or of perishing in the most hideous torments: such, madam, is the life that has been led by the first missionaries especially: if for some time past it has been less rude in some respects, it has been attended with regard to the evangelical labourers with internal, and consequently more sensible mortifications, which far from diminishing in length of time grow in proportion to the increase of the colony, and as the natives begin to have a freer correspondence with all sorts of persons.

<sup>[136]</sup> Lastly, that I may in a few words draw the portrait of these nations with a mien and appearance altogether

gether savage, and with manners and customs which favour of the grossest barbarity, they enjoy all the advantages of society, without almost any of those defects, which disturb the publick tranquillity amongst us. Whilst they appear entirely void of passion, they commit in cold blood, and even sometimes from principle, the same actions which the most violent and ungovernable rage is capable of inspiring. Those very persons who seemed to lead the most wretched lives, were perhaps the only happy mortals on the face of the earth, before they were acquainted with those objects which seduce and pervert us: and even yet luxury has made no great ravages amongst them. We perceive in them a mixture of ferocity and gentleness, the passions and appetites of beasts of prey, joined to a virtue which does honour to human nature. At first view one would imagine them without any form of government, law or subordination, and that living in an absolute independance, they abandon themselves to the conduct of blind chance, and to the wildest caprice; they notwithstanding enjoy all the advantages which the best regulated authority is capable of procuring, in the most civilized nations. Born free and independant, they are struck with horror at whatever has the shadow of despotic power, and very rarely deviate from certain maxims and usages founded in good sense alone, which holds the place of law, and supplies in some sort the want of legal authority. They have a natural repugnance to restraint of every sort, but reason alone is capable of retaining them in a kind of subordination, not the less effectual towards the end proposed for being entirely voluntary.

[137] Any person who has once insinuated himself into a considerable share of their esteem, will find them sufficiently

ciently docile and ready to do any thing he desires; but it is no easy matter to gain their esteem to such a pitch. This they give to merit only, and that to a superior degree of it, of which they are full as good judges as those amongst us, who pique themselves most on their discernment. They form their notions of this by the physiognomy, and there is not perhaps in the world a set of men who are better judges this way: this is owing to their having none of those prejudices in favour of any person which mislead us, and that by studying nature alone they know her perfectly well. As they are neither slaves to ambition nor interest, as it is these two passions only which have weakened in us the sentiments of humanity, which the author of nature has engraven in our hearts, the difference of conditions is unnecessary for the maintenance of society amongst them.

Thus, Madam, we never, or at least very seldom, meet with those haughty minds, which filled with a notion of their own grandeur and merit, imagine themselves almost a species apart; who disdain the rest of mankind whose love and confidence they therefore never obtain; who never converse with their equals, because the jealousy which prevails amongst the great, will not permit them to cultivate a very near acquaintance; who know not themselves because they never study themselves, but are constantly blown up with self applause; and lastly, who never once reflect, that in order to acquire the affections of men, they must first stoop, and in some sort, condescend to be their equals; so that with all this pretended superiority <sup>[138]</sup> of understanding, which they look upon as the peculiar right of the eminent stations they possess, most of them grovel in a proud and incurable ignorance, of what is really worth knowing, and consequently never taste the true  
and

and genuine sweets of life. In this country all men are equal, manhood being the quality most esteemed amongst them, without any distinction from birth; without any prerogative of rank capable of doing prejudice to the rights of private persons; without any pre-eminence from merit which begets pride, and which makes others too sensible of their own inferiority. And though there is perhaps less delicacy of sentiment in the Indians than amongst us, there is however abundantly more probity with infinitely less ceremony, or equivocal compliments.

Religion alone is capable of perfecting the good qualities and natural dispositions of these people, and of correcting what is wrong in them: this is common to them with others, but what is peculiar to them is, that they bring fewer obstacles to this improvement, after they have once begun to believe, which must ever be the work of special grace. It is likewise true, that in order fully to establish the empire of religion over them, we must shew them the practice of it in all its purity in its professors: they are extremely susceptible of the scandal given by bad christians, and such are all those who are newly instructed in the principles of christian morality.

You will perhaps ask me, Madam, whether they have any religion? To this I answer, that though we cannot absolutely affirm that they are without any, we must however confess, that it is very difficult to define what religion this is. I shall en-<sup>[139]</sup>ertain you more at large on this article with my first leisure; for though I have not a vast deal to do in this place, yet I am often interrupted in such manner, that I cannot promise on having two hours in a day to myself. This letter as well as most of the preceding ones, will shew you that I do not finish them at one sitting. I shall content myself at present with observ-  
ing,

ing, in order to compleat the portrait of Indians, that even in their most indifferent actions, we may discover traces of the primitive religion, but which escape those who do not view them with sufficient attention, these being still more effaced by the want of instruction, than changed by the mixture of superstitious worship, and by fabulous traditions.

*I am, &c.*



## LETTER TWENTY-FOURTH.

*Of the Religion and Traditions of the Indians of Canada.*

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FORT AT THE RIVER ST. JOSEPH, Sept. 8, 1721.

MADAM,

THIS letter will in all likelyhood be a very long one, unless some unforeseen hindrance should oblige me to put off to some other opportunity, what I have been able to collect, relating to the belief, traditions and religion of our Indians.

Nothing is more certain than that the Indians of this continent, have an idea of a Supreme Being, though nothing at the same time can be more obscure. They all in general agree in looking upon him as the first spirit, and the governor and creator of the world, but when you press them a little close on this article, in order to know what they understand by the sovereign spirit, you find no more than a tissue of absurd imaginations, of fables so ill contrived, of systems so ill digested and so wild, that it is impossible to give any regular or just account of them. It is pretended that the Sioux approach much nearer than the <sup>[142]</sup> other Indians, towards a just conception of this first principle, but the little commerce we have hitherto had with them, does not permit me to be sufficiently informed  
of

of their traditions, to enable me to speak of them with any degree of certainty.

Almost all the nations of the Algonquin language, give this sovereign Being the appellation of the great Hare;<sup>1</sup> some again call him Michabou, and others Atahocan. Most of them hold the opinion that he was born upon the waters, together with his whole court, entirely composed of four-footed animals like himself; that he formed the earth of a grain of sand, which he took from the bottom of the ocean, and that he created man of the bodies of the dead animals.<sup>2</sup> There are likewise some who mention a god of the waters, who opposed the designs of the great Hare, or at least refused to be assisting to him. This god is according to some, the great Tyger, but it must be observed, that the true tyger is not to be found in Canada; thus this tradition is probably of foreign extraction.<sup>3</sup> Lastly, they have a third god called Matcomek, whom they invoke in the winter season, and concerning whom, I have learned nothing particular.<sup>4</sup>

The Areskouï of the Hurons, and the Agreskouê of the Iroquois, is in the opinion of these nations, the Sovereign Being and the god of war. These Indians do not give the same original to mankind with the Algonquins; they do not so much as ascend so high as the first creation. Ac-

<sup>1</sup>See note 9 in letter XIX, page 41.

<sup>2</sup>Creation myths are found in nearly all tribes. This myth recited by Charlevoix is a secondary one among the Algonquian peoples. See it more fully developed in *Handbook of North American Indians*, II, 22. The idea of men created from the bodies of animals is the origin of totemism.

<sup>3</sup>For Michabou see letter XIX, page 41, note 9. His twin brother, according to some myths, is the god of the waters. The representations of this water spirit were sometimes called tigers or panthers from their peculiar shape. Many effigy mounds in Wisconsin, formerly called panthers, are now recognized as water spirits. The panther, largest of the cat family in North America, was not uncommon around the Great Lakes.

<sup>4</sup>The god of winter was another brother of Michabou, usually evoked as Chakakena-pok. He was an evil spirit who brought suffering and disaster, hence must be propitiated.

cording

cording to them there were in the beginning six men in the world, and if you ask them who placed them there, they answer you, they dont know. <sup>[143]</sup> They add, that one of these men ascended into heaven in quest of a woman, called Atahentsic, of whom he had carnal knowledge, and who soon afterwards proved with child: that the master of heaven perceiving it, threw her headlong from the height of the Empyrean, and that she was received on the back of a tortoise: that she was afterwards brought to bed of two children, one of which killed the other.

There is no more said either of the five men, or even of the husband of Atahentsic, who according to some, had only one daughter, who was the mother of Thaouitsaran and Jouskeka. This latter who was the eldest, killed his brother, and in a little time after his grand-mother resigned in his favour the government of the world. They say likewise, that Atahentsic is the same with the moon, and that Jouskeka was the sun. There is as you see, Madam, very little connexion in all this, the sun being often taken for Areskouï, in as much as he is the great genius; but is there less contradiction in the theology of the Egyptians and Grecians, who are the first sages of pagan antiquity? The reason is, that it is essential to falsehood to contradict itself, and to have no solid foundation.<sup>5</sup>

The gods of the Indians have bodies, and live much in the same manner with us, but without any of those inconveniencies to which we are subject. The word spirit amongst them, signifies only a being of a more excellent nature than others. They have no words to express what

<sup>5</sup> Charlevoix has taken this creation legend from the Jesuits' account of its Huron form. See *Jesuit Relations*, viii, 117-119; x, 127-139; an Iroquois type of this myth is in *ibid.*, xlii, 149. For an interpretation of these cosmic theories see Hewitt, "Cosmogonic Gods of the Iroquois," in American Association for the Advancement of Science *Proceedings*, 1895, 241-250.

passes the bounds of their own understanding, their conceptions being extremely limited, with respect to whatever is not the object of their senses, or to <sup>[144]</sup> any thing besides the common occurrences of life. They however ascribe to those imaginary beings, a kind of immensity and omnipresence, for in whatever place they are, they invoke them, speak to them, believe they hear what is said to them, and act in consequence. To all the questions you put to these barbarians, in order to obtain a farther account of their belief, they answer that this is all they have been taught or know of the matter; nay, there are only a few old men who have been initiated in their mysteries who know so much.

According to the Iroquois, the posterity of Jouskeka did not go beyond the third generation. There came on a deluge in which not a soul was saved, so that in order to repeople the earth it was necessary to change beasts into men. This notion, Madam, of an universal deluge is very general amongst the Americans; but there is scarce any room to doubt, that there has been another much more recent and peculiar to America.<sup>6</sup> I should never have done, were I to relate all that the Indians tell us with respect to the history of their principal divinities, and the origin of the world; but besides the first being, or the great spirit, and the other Gods who are often confounded with them, there is likewise an infinite number of genii or inferior spirits, both good and evil, who have each their peculiar form of worship.

The Iroquois place Atahentsic at the head of these latter, and make Jouskeka the chief of the former; they even

<sup>6</sup>The deluge myths appear in almost all the tribal mythologies. Charlevoix sensibly attributes them not to the universal deluge, but to local floods. See one of these myths in *Jesuit Relations*, x, 131-133.

sometimes

sometimes confound him with the god, who drove his grandmother out of heaven, for suffering herself to be seduced by a mortal. They never address themselves to the evil genii, except to beg of them to do them no <sup>[145]</sup> hurt, but they suppose that the others are placed as so many guardians of mankind, and that every person has his own tutelary. In the Huron language these are called Okkis,<sup>7</sup> and in the Algonquin Manitous:<sup>8</sup> it is to them they have recourse in all perils and undertakings, as also when they would obtain some extraordinary favour; there is nothing but what they may think they may beg of them, let it be ever so unreasonable or contrary to good morals. This protection however is not acquired at the birth of the person, he must first be expert at the management of the bow and arrow, before he can merit this favour, and much preparation must be used before he can receive it, it being looked upon as the most important affair in their whole lives: the principal circumstances of it are these.

They begin with blacking the child's face; afterwards they make him fast for eight days together, without giving him a morsel of any thing to eat, and the tutelary genius must appear to him in a dream within this space of time. Now the empty brain of a poor child just entering into the state of adolescence, cannot fail of furnishing him with dreams, which they take great care to cause him repeat every morning. The fast however often ends before the lawful time, there being few children who have strength enough to carry it so far; but this occasions no difficulty, the conveniency of dispensations being fully known here as it is every where else. Whatever thing the

<sup>7</sup>For the use of this term to express something wonderful see *Jesuit Relations*, xii, 243.

<sup>8</sup>The Winnebago called Nicolet, the first white man to visit them, "Manitouiriniou" — the latter portion of the word, "iriniou," means man; it has the same root as the word Illinois. See Kellogg, *Early Narratives of the Northwest*, 16.



child happens to dream of, is always supposed to be the tutelary genius, or rather this thing is held as a symbol, or figure, under which the genius manifests himself; but it happens to the Indians as it does to every other people, who have deviated from the primi-<sup>[146]</sup> tive religion, that is, to hold fast by the figure whilst they lose sight of the reality.

Notwithstanding these symbols signify nothing of themselves, sometimes it is the head of a bird, at other times the foot of some animal, or perhaps a bit of wood; in a word, the vilest and most common thing imaginable. This is preserved however with as much care, as the Dii Penates, or household gods were amongst the ancients.<sup>9</sup> There is even nothing in all nature, if we believe the Indians, which has not its genius, of which there are some of all ranks, but with different powers. When they are at a loss to conceive any thing, they attribute it to a superior genius, and their manner of expressing themselves then is, *This is a spirit*. This is said with greater justice of them, who have any singular talent, or who have performed any extraordinary action, *These are spirits*, that is they have a tutelary genius of an order superior to the common.<sup>10</sup>

Some of them, and especially their jugglers, endeavour to persuade the multitude, that they are transported into extasies. This folly has been of all ages and amongst all nations, and is the parent of all false religions; the vanity natural to mankind, not being able to devise any more efficacious means of governing the weak and simple, and the multitude at last carried along with them, those who

<sup>9</sup> It was placed in a medicine bag or pouch, usually formed of an animal skin. Each head of a family had a medicine bag. See letter XIV *ante*, vol. I, page 321, note 12.

<sup>10</sup> This was the greeting for the white men on their first visits to Indian villages. For instance see the reception of Nicolas Perrot in the Green Bay region. Kellogg, *Early Narratives*, 75.

valued themselves the most on the superiority of their understandings. The American impostors, though they owe to themselves only all their address in this point, draw all the advantages from it to which they aspire. The jugglers never fail to publish that their genii give them great insight into the remotest transactions, and the most distant futurity in their pretended ex-<sup>[147]</sup>tasies; and as chance alone, if we would not ascribe some share of it to the devil, causes them to divine or conjecture some times pretty right, they acquire by this means great credit, and are believed to be genii of the first order.

As soon as it has been declared to a child what he is thence forward to regard as his protecting genius, they instruct him with great care in the obligation he owes him, to honour him, to follow the council he shall receive from him in sleep, to merit his favour, to place in him his whole confidence, and to dread the effect of his displeasure should he neglect to acquit himself of his duty to him. This solemnity ends with a feast, and the custom is likewise to prick on the body of the child the figure of his OKKI, or MANITOU. It would seem that so solemn an engagement, the mark of which can never be effaced, ought to be inviolable; a very small matter is however sufficient to break it.

The Indians are not easily brought to confess themselves in the wrong, even to their gods themselves, and make no manner of difficulty in justifying themselves at their expence: thus whenever they are under the necessity either of condemning themselves or their tutelar, the blame is always thrown upon the latter, and they apply to another without any ceremony, only observing the same rites as to the former: The women have also their Manitous, or Okkis, but are far from paying them the  
same

same respect with the men, perhaps from their giving them less employment.

To all these genii are offered different sorts of offerings, or if you will sacrifices. They throw into the rivers and lakes tobacco or birds, which <sup>[148]</sup> have been strangled, in order to render the god of the waters propitious. In honour of the sun, and sometimes even of inferior spirits, they throw into the fire all sorts of useful things, and such as they believe they owe to them. This is sometimes done out of gratitude, but oftner from interested views, these people not being susceptible of any sentiments of affection towards their divinities. They observe also on some occasions a sort of libations, and all this accompanied with invocations, wrapt up in mysterious terms, which they have never been able to explain to Europeans, whether it be that these at bottom have no signification at all, or that the sense has been lost, whilst the words by which the tradition has been transmitted have been preserved; and perhaps too, they may be willing to make a mystery of it.<sup>11</sup> We also meet with collars of porcelain, tobacco, maize, pease, and whole animals, especially dogs, on the sides of difficult or dangerous roads on rocks, or near cataracts, which are so many offerings to the genii who preside in these places. I formerly said that the dog was the victim most commonly offered to them; these are hung up, and even sometimes alive by the hind feet, and suffered to die mad. The war feast, which always consists of dogs, may also pass for a sacrifice.<sup>12</sup> Lastly, they render

<sup>11</sup> This probably refers to the secret societies in every tribe. See mention of that among the Menominee in letter XX *ante*, page 57, note 12. For a description of an invocation see *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, vii, 348.

<sup>12</sup> Langlade's grandson related that when the warriors at Milwaukee refused to go on the warpath, Langlade made a dog feast for them, when they could no longer refuse. *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, iii, 230-231.

nearly

nearly the same honours to the evil genii as to those which pass for propitious, when they have any reason to dread their malice.

Thus, Madam, amongst nations who were pretended to have no idea of religion or of a deity, every thing on the contrary appears to be an object of religious worship, or at least to have some relation to it. Some have imagined that their fasts had no other end, than to accustom them to sup- <sup>[149]</sup> port hunger, and I will allow that this motive might be some part of the reason of this usage; but every circumstance with which they are accompanied, proves that religion has the greatest share in it; were it only their extreme attention in observing, as I have already taken notice, what dreams they have during that time, it being certain that such dreams are looked upon as true oracles and warnings from heaven.

It is still less doubtful, that their vows are pure acts of religion, the usage being absolutely the same in this respect as with us. For example, when they happen to be without provisions, as often falls out in their voyages and huntings, they promise their genii to present in honour of them, a portion of the first beast they shall afterwards kill to some chief, and not to touch a morsel of it till they shall have acquitted themselves of their promise. Should this happen to be impossible by reason of the great distance of this chief, they burn the part allotted for him, and thus make it a kind of sacrifice.

Formerly the Indians in the neighbourhood of Acadia, had in their country near the sea-shore, a tree extremely ancient, of which they relate many wonders, and which was always loaden with offerings. After the sea had laid open its whole root, it still supported itself a long time almost in the air, against the violence of the winds and  
waves,

waves, which confirmed those Indians in the notion, that this tree must be the abode of some powerful spirit, nor was its fall even capable of undeceiving them, so that as long as the smallest part of its branches appeared above water, they paid it the same honours as whilst it stood.

[150] Most of their festivals, songs and dances also appeared to me to have their origin in religion, and to preserve several traces of it; but one must be very sharp-sighted, or rather one must have a very strong imagination to perceive what certain travellers pretend to have discovered in them. I have known some persons, who not being able to get it out of their heads, that our Indians are descended from the ancient Hebrews, find in every thing a strong resemblance between these barbarians and the people of God.<sup>13</sup> It is true there are some customs which have some appearance of this, such as not to make use of knives in certain repasts, and not to break the bones of the beasts eaten in them; and such also is the separation of the women from their husbands, during certain infirmities of the sex. And some have even heard, or at least have thought they heard them pronounce the word Allelujah in some of their songs: but who would ever believe their boring their ears and nostrils, to be in obedience to the law of circumcision? And besides who does not know that the rite of circumcision, is more ancient than the law which ordained the observation of it to Abraham and his posterity? The feast which is made on their return from hunting, and in which nothing must be left, has likewise been taken for a kind of Holocaust, or for a relique of the Jewish pass-over, and the rather, say they, because when any person

<sup>13</sup> The theory that the Indians were the descendants of the lost tribes of Israel was very common in the eighteenth century. Charlevoix combated this view. See *Preliminary Discourse*, vol. I, pages 20, 35, *ante*.



was not able to get the better of his own portion, he was at liberty to make use of the assistance of his neighbours, as was the practice amongst the people of God, when one family were not able to eat the whole Paschal lamb.<sup>14</sup>

An ancient missionary, who lived long amongst the Outaways, writes, that amongst these Indians <sup>[151]</sup> an old man does the office of a priest on the festivals I have been just mentioning, that he begins by returning thanks to the genii for the success of the hunting, and that afterwards another person takes a roll of tobacco, breaks it in two and throws it into the fire.<sup>15</sup> What is certain is, that those who have cited them as a proof of the possibility of atheism, properly so called, were not acquainted with them. It is true they never discourse about religion, and that their extreme indolence and indifference on this point, has always been the greatest obstacle to their conversion to Christianity, but the smallest acquaintance with them is sufficient to confute those, who say they have no idea of a deity. Indolence is their predominant passion; it even appears in their most important affairs, but in spite of this defect, and even in spite of that spirit of independance in which they are brought up, there is no nation in the world who pay a more slavish respect to the Deity, of whom their ideas are very confused, so that they never attribute any thing to chance, and derive an omen from every thing that happens, which is according to them, as I have already remarked, a declaration of the will of heaven.

I have read in some memoirs, that among several nations on this continent, there were formerly young women who lived separate from all commerce with men, and who never married. I am neither able to vouch nor contradict

<sup>14</sup> This refers to the eat-all feast.

<sup>15</sup> Apparently a reference to *Jesuit Relations*, xxxiii, 227.

this assertion. Virginity is in itself so perfect a state, that we ought not to be surprized it should have been respected in all countries in the world; but our most ancient missionaries never make mention, at least as far as I know of these vestals, though several of them agree in the esteem in which celibacy was <sup>[152]</sup> held in some countries. I even find that amongst the Hurons and Iroquois, there were not long since recluses, who observed continence, and they shew certain very salutary plants which have no virtue, according to the Indians, except they are employed by virgin hands.

The best established opinion amongst our Americans is, that of the immortality of the soul.<sup>16</sup> They do not however believe it to be purely spiritual more than their geni, and to tell truth, are incapable of giving any distinct definition of either. If you ask them what they think of their souls, they answer, that they are like so many shadows and living images of the body, and it is by a consequence of this principle, that they believe every thing in the universe to be animated. Thus it is only by tradition they have received this notion of the immortality of the soul. And in the different expressions they make use of, in explaining themselves on this subject, they frequently confound the soul with its faculties, and these again with their operations, though they very well know how to distinguish them, when they have a mind to speak with accuracy.

They maintain, likewise, that the soul when separated from the body, preserves the same inclinations and passions it had in its former state, and this is the reason why they bury along with the dead, the things they imagine they may stand in need of.<sup>17</sup> They are even persuaded, that

<sup>16</sup>On this belief in the future life see *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, ii, 494; iii, 144.

<sup>17</sup>This custom of burial with artifacts has been of infinite value to the study of American archæology.

it remains hovering about the carcase until the festival of the dead, of which I shall give you an account by and by; and that afterwards it goes into the country of souls, where, according to some, it is transformed into a tortoise.

[153] There are others who acknowledge two souls in men; to the one, they attribute every thing I have been just now speaking of, and pretend that the other never quits the body, unless it is to pass into some other, which however happens only, say they, to the souls of little children, which having enjoyed but a short term of life, obtain leave to begin a new one.<sup>18</sup> It is for this reason that they bury children by the high-way sides, that the women who pass that way may collect their souls. Now these souls which are such faithful companions to their bodies must be fed, and it is in order to discharge this duty, that eatables are laid upon their tombs; but this is of short continuance, so that the souls must begin in time to learn to fast. They are sometimes hard enough put to it to subsist the living, without the additional charge of feeding the dead.

One thing with respect to which the Indians are never forgetful, let them be in ever so great an extremity, whereas amongst us the living are enriched by the spoils of the dead; the Indians on the contrary, not only carry along with them to the grave every thing that belonged to them, but also receive presents of their relations and friends besides. For this reason they were extremely scandalized, on seeing the French open the sepulchers in order to strip the dead of their robes of beaver skins. Tombs are held so sacred in this country, that to violate them is the greatest hostility that can be committed against a nation, and the strongest proof that you set them at defiance.

<sup>18</sup>According to some myths one soul represents the life and one the will of man. Among the Sioux existed the theory of more than one soul. See *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, xvi, 187.

I have already said, that the souls, when the time of leaving their bodies forever is come, go into a region which is allotted for their everlasting abode. <sup>[154]</sup> This country say the Indians, lies very far to the westward so that the souls are several months in arriving at it. They have even vast difficulties to surmount, and are exposed to prodigious dangers by the way. They above all things talk much of a river they have to pass, and on which many have been shipwrecked; of a dog from whom they have much ado to defend themselves, of a place of torment where they expiate their sins; of another, where the souls of those prisoners of war who have been burned are tormented, and where they arrive as late as possible.

This notion is the reason why after the death of these wretches, they take great care to visit every place near their cabbins, striking incessantly with rods and raising the most hideous cries, in order to drive the souls to a distance, and to keep them from lurking about their cabbins, in order to revenge the torments they have made them undergo. The Iroquois say, that Atahentsic has her common residence in this tartarus, and that her sole occupation is the seducing of souls to their destruction; but that Jouskeka omits nothing to secure them against the wicked designs of his grandmother. Amongst the fabulous stories of what passes in the lower regions, and which resemble so much those in Homer and Virgil, there is one which seems to have been copied from the fable of Orpheus and Euridice, in which there hardly wants any thing, except to change the names.

Moreover, Madam, this happiness, which the Indians hope to enjoy in their imaginary Elysium, is not believed to be the recompense of virtue only; to have been a good hunter, brave in war, fortunate in all one's enterprises, to  
have



have killed <sup>[155]</sup> and burned a great number of enemies, are the sole merits which entitle them to this paradise, the whole felicity of which consists in an inexhaustible plenty of game and fishes, an everlasting spring, a vast abundance of all things without being obliged to work, and a full satisfaction of all their sensual appetites. These are likewise the only blessings they ask of their gods in their life-time. All their songs, which are originally their prayers, have no other theme besides the goods of this life, there being not the least mention any more than in their vows of an hereafter; they are certain of being happy in the other world in proportion to their happiness in this.

The souls of beasts have also a place in the infernal regions, and are according to the Indians immortal, as well as ours; they even acknowledge in them a kind of reason, and not only every species, but every individual animal, if we may believe them, has its tutelary genius. In a word they hold no difference between us and the brutes but in degree only. Man, say they, is king of the animals, who have all of them the same faculties, but that man possesses them in a very superior degree. They hold likewise that in hell there are models of souls of all kinds, but they give themselves very little trouble in explaining this notion, and in general concern themselves very little with matters of pure speculation: have the sagest philosophers of Pagan antiquity who have been at so much pains to explain them, been much more successful than they? It is impossible to walk safely amidst these absurdities, but by the torch of faith.

<sup>[156]</sup> There is nothing in which these barbarians carry their superstition to a more extravagant length, than in what regards dreams; but they vary greatly in their manner of explaining themselves on this point. Sometimes it is the



the reasonable soul which ranges abroad, whilst the sensitive soul continues to animate the body. Sometimes it is the familiar genius, who gives salutary council with respect to what is going to happen. Sometimes it is a visit made by the soul of the object of which he dreams. But in whatever manner the dream is conceived, it is always looked upon as a thing sacred, and as the most ordinary way in which the gods make known their will to men.<sup>19</sup>

Filled with this idea, they cannot conceive how we should pay no regard to them. For the most part they look upon them either as a desire of the soul inspired by some genius, or an order from him; and in consequence of this principle, they hold it a religious duty to obey them; and an Indian having dreamed of having a finger cut off, had it really cut off as soon as he awoke, after having prepared himself for this important action by a feast. Another having dreamed of being prisoner and in the hands of his enemies, was much at a loss what to do; he consulted the jugglers, and by their advice, caused himself to be tied to a post and burnt in several parts of the body.

There are happy and unhappy dreams. For instance, to dream of seeing a great number of elks is, say they, a sign of life; but to dream of seeing bears, denotes that the party is soon to die. I have already said, that we must except those times in which they prepare themselves for the hunting <sup>[157]</sup> of these animals. But in order to shew you, Madam, to what a length these barbarians carry their extravagance, with regard to dreams, I will relate to you

<sup>19</sup>It is impossible to overestimate the influence of dreams on Indian daily life. The belief in dreams was the occasion of many absurd and fantastic performances; they occasioned wars, feuds, separations, and many calamities. The missionaries constantly combated this superstition. For a clever use of this means to stop a war party see *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, xvi, 104–105.

a fact attested by two irreproachable persons who were eye-witnesses to it.

Two missionaries were travelling in the company of some Indians, and one night as their guides were in a profound sleep, one of them awaked suddenly quite out of breath, making efforts to cry out, and beating himself as if he had been possessed with some devil. The noise he made soon waked every body: they at first thought the man mad; they seized him and tried every means to bring him to himself, but all to no purpose: his fury continued to encrease and as they were no longer able to hold him, they hid all the arms for fear of the worst. Some of them afterwards bethought themselves of preparing for him a beverage made of certain herbs of great virtue; but when they were least aware the patient leaped into the river.

He was immediately drawn out, and though he confessed he was cold, he refused to come near a good fire that had been just lighted: he sat down at the foot of a tree, and as he appeared more composed, they brought him the draught they had prepared for him. It is to this child, said he, you must give it, pointing to a bears skin stuffed with straw; he was obeyed, and the whole of the beverage was poured down the throat of the animal. They then asked what had been the matter with him? I dreamed, said he, that a racoon had got into my belly. They all burst out a laughing, but there was a necessity of curing his dis-tempered imagination, which was done in this manner.

[158] They all fell to counterfeit the madman, crying with all their might, that they had animals in their bellies, but added, that they were unwilling to throw themselves into the river in order to dislodge them, on account of the cold; and that they thought sweating a much better way. Our hypocondriac found this proposal excellent;

a stove

a stove was immediately erected, into which they all entered with loud cries, every one endeavouring to counterfeit the cry of the animal he pretended to have in his belly, one a goose, another a duck, a third a bustard, and a fourth a frog; the dreamer also counterfeited the cry of a racoon. But what is really ridiculous is, that all the rest beat measure, striking with all their might upon his shoulders, with design to fatigue him, and cause him to fall asleep. To any other than an Indian, he had what was sufficient to hinder him from closing his eyes for several days; they however succeeded in what they intended. The patient slept long, and at his waking found himself perfectly cured, being neither sensible of the sweating which must have exhausted him, nor of the blows and bruises which he had received, and having lost the remembrance even of the very dream which had cost him so dear.

But it is not only he who dreams that is to satisfy the obligations, he believes he is laid under by the dream: it would be a crime in any person to refuse him, what he has desired in his dream, and you may very well judge, Madam, with what consequences this is likely to be attended.<sup>20</sup> But as the Indians are not much governed by self-interest, this principle is attended with less abuse than it would be any where else; and besides, every one may use it in his turn. If the thing desired happen to be of such a nature as not to be capable of being <sup>[159]</sup> furnished by a private person, the public take the obligation of it upon themselves, and even should they be obliged to go in quest of it five hundred leagues, it must be found, cost

<sup>20</sup>A story is told of Sir William Johnson that an old chief told him he had dreamed he would present him with a coat, hat, and full outfit of clothing. Johnson complied, but upon his next visit he in his turn told the chief that he had dreamed that the Indian presented him with a large tract of valuable land. The Indian was forced to consent, remarking, "Brother, you dream too hard."

what

what it will; and when it has once been obtained, it is inconceivable with what care it is preserved. If it happen to be any inanimate thing, they are more at ease; but if an animal, its death occasions a surprizing anxiety.

The affair becomes still more serious, should any one take it into his head to dream that he cuts the throat of another, for he will certainly accomplish it if he can; but woe to him, in his turn, should a third person dream that he revenges the dead. They may, however, easily extricate themselves from such difficulties, provided they have presence of mind immediately to oppose to such a dream another which contradicts it. "I plainly see," says the first dreamer, in that case, "that your spirit is stronger than mine, so let us mention it no more." They are not all, however, so easily brought to relinquish their purpose; but there are few who may not be satisfied, or in other words, have their genius appeased by some small present.

I do not know whether religion has any share in what is commonly called *the festival of dreams*, to which the Iroquois and some others have with more propriety, given the appellation of *the turning of the head*. This is a sort of Bacchanalian ceremony which commonly lasts fifteen days, and is celebrated towards the end of winter. There is no species of folly which is not then committed; every one running from cabbin to cabbin, disguised in a thousand different shapes, all of them equally <sup>[160]</sup> ridiculous, breaking and destroying every thing, no one daring to oppose them. Whoever would avoid such a confusion, and not be exposed to all the outrages he must suffer on this occasion, ought to take care to absent himself. The moment any of those Bacchanalians meet with any one he gives him his dream to interpret, which if he does, it is certainly at his own cost, as he is obliged to procure what-  
ever



ever he has dreamed of. The festival ended, every thing is restored, a great feast is made, when they are solely intent on repairing the damages during the masquerade, which are most commonly far from being inconsiderable; for this is likewise one of those opportunities which are waited for in silence, in order to give a hearty drubbing to those, from whom they imagine they have received any affront: but the feast being over, every thing is to be forgotten.

I find a description of one of these festivals in the journal of a missionary, who was, contrary to his inclination, spectator of one of them at Onnontagué.<sup>21</sup> This was proclaimed 22d of February, the proclamation being made by the elders, with as much formality as if it had been an affair of State. This was scarce over, when men, women, and children were running about almost entirely naked, although it was then intollerably cold. At first they visited every cabbin, then they wandered about for some time on all sides, without knowing whither they went, or what they would be at; one would have taken them for so many drunken persons or madmen, whom some sudden transport of fury had driven beside themselves.

[161] Many were satisfied with having indulged themselves in this piece of folly, and appeared no more. But the rest resolved to make use of the privilege of the festival, during which they are reputed as persons out of their senses, and consequently as not accountable for what they do, and accordingly embrace such opportunity of revenging their private quarrels, which on this occasion they did most effectually. Upon some they threw water by whole pail-fulls, which freezing immediately pierced with cold those upon whom it fell. On others they threw hot ashes, or all manner of filth; some threw fire-brands or

<sup>21</sup> The following is taken from the description given in *Jesuit Relations*, xlii, 155-169.

burning



burning coals at the head of the first person they met; others destroyed every thing in the cabbins, fell upon those to whom they bore any grudge or spite, and loaded them with blows. In order to be delivered from this persecution, it was necessary to guess their dreams, of which it was frequently impossible to have any manner of conception.

The missionary and his companion were often on the point of being more than bare spectators of this extravagance: one of those madmen went into a cabin where they had seen them take refuge at the beginning of the fray. Luckily for them they had just left it, otherwise there is reason to believe, this furious fellow would have done them a mischief. Disconcerted by their retreat, he cried out that he wanted somebody to guess his dream, and that he would be satisfied on the spot: Some delay being made he said, I will kill a Frenchman; immediately the owner of the cabin threw him a French coat, which he ran through in several places.

[162] Then the person who had thrown him the coat, falling in his turn into a fury, cried out that he would revenge the French, and that he would reduce the whole village to ashes: He began by setting fire to his own cabin in which this scene had passed, and every body having left it, he shut himself up in it. The fire which was kindled in several places had not as yet broke out, when one of the missionaries appeared and was going to enter it, when being told what had happened, and fearing what might happen to his host, he broke open the door, laid hold on the Indian, turned him out, extinguished the fire, and shut himself up in the cabin. His host in the mean time ran through the whole village, crying out that he would set it on fire: a dog was then thrown to him, in  
hopes

hopes that he would satiate his rage upon this animal, but he said, this was still not sufficient to repair the affront that had been done him, by killing a Frenchman in his cabin; upon which they threw him a second which he cut in pieces, and his transport immediately ceased.

This man had a brother, who had a mind to play his part likewise. He dressed himself nearly in the same manner as the satyrs are represented, being covered all over from head to foot with the leaves of maize: he had equipped two women like megæras, their faces being blacked, their hair disheveled, a wolf's skin over their body, and a stake in their hands. Thus escorted he went through all the cabbins, crying out and howling with all his might; he clambered up their roofs, where he played a thousand tricks, with as much dexterity as the most experienced rope-dancer could have done, then he sent forth dreadful cries, as if some great misfortune had befallen him; afterwards he came down, <sup>[163]</sup> and walked gravely along, preceded by his two bacchanalians, who being seized with the same phrenzy in their turn, overthrew every thing they met with in their way. These were scarce recovered from this madness or wearied with their part, when another woman succeeded in their place, entered the cabin, in which were the two Jesuits, armed with a musket, she had just got by propounding a dream to be explained, and sung the war song making a thousand imprecations if she did not make some prisoners.

A warrior followed close after this Amazon, a bow and arrow in one hand, and in the other a bayonet. After he had made his throat sore with crying, he suddenly fell upon a woman who was not in the least aware of it, held his bayonet to her throat, seized her by the hair, cut off a handful of it, and so went off. Next appeared a juggler holding

holding in his hand a staff adorned with feathers, by means of which he boasted that he could divine the most secret and hidden transactions. An Indian accompanied bearing a vase filled with I know not what liquor, of which he gave him to drink from time to time; the quack had no sooner put it to his lips than he thrust it from him again, blowing on his hands and staff, and at each time divining all such riddles as were proposed to him.

Two women came afterwards, giving it to be understood, that they wanted something. One of them immediately spread on the ground a mattress, by which it was divined that she wanted some fish, which were accordingly given her. The other carried a mattock in her hand, by which they conceived she wanted a field to labour, she was there- <sup>[164]</sup> fore led without the village, and immediately had her request granted her. A chief had dreamed, as he said, of seeing two human hearts: the dream could not be explained which caused universal anxiety; this person made a great deal of noise about it, so that the feast was prolonged for a day on this account: but all was to no purpose, so that he was obliged to be satisfied. Sometimes were seen companies of armed men, who seemed as if they were going to engage; sometimes troops of dancers, playing all sorts of farces. This madness lasted four days, and it appeared that the usual time of it had been abridged, in consideration of the two Jesuits; they, however, committed full as many disorders as they used to do in fifteen. They had moreover this further regard for the missionaries, as not to disturb them in the exercise of their functions, nor to hinder the Christians from performing their religious duties. But I have already said enough on this article; I am now sealing my letter, in order to give it to a traveller, who sets out for the colony, *and am*, &c.

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## LETTER TWENTY-FIFTH.

*Sequel of the Traditions of the Indians.*

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FORT ON THE RIVER ST. JOSEPH, September 14, 1721.

MADAM,

IT is now three days since I set out from this place for Chicagou, by coasting along the south shore of lake Michigan; but we found the lake so stormy that we resolved to return hither and to seek out some other way to reach Louisiana.<sup>1</sup> Our departure is fixed on the 16th, and I am going to make use of this delay of two days to continue my account of the customs and traditions of our Americans.

The Indians, with respect to what I have been speaking of in my last letter, acknowledge only the power of the good genii, and none but wizards and such as have recourse to witchcraft, are held to have any commerce with evil spirits; and it is the women chiefly who exercise this detestable profession.<sup>2</sup> Their professed jugglers not only do not ex-<sup>[166]</sup>ercise it openly, but it is even a particular

<sup>1</sup>September is usually a month of storms on the upper Great Lakes.

<sup>2</sup>Belief in witchcraft was common to nearly all American Indian tribes, and a person accused was frequently in danger of death. Among the Iroquois, women were accused more often than men. On the survivals of this belief among the modern Iroquois see *Journal of American Folk Lore*, I, 184-193.

study

study with them, to be able to study witchcraft, and to hinder its pernicious effects. There is nothing at bottom in all I have been told on this head but mere quackery; sometimes they extract the venom of serpents, or make use of herbs gathered at certain times, while they are pronouncing certain words, or of animals which are first strangled, and some parts of which are afterwards thrown into the fire.<sup>3</sup>

Amongst the Illinois and almost all the other nations, they make small figures to represent those whose days they have a mind to shorten, and which they stab to the heart. At other times they take a stone, and by means of certain invocations, they pretend to form such another in the heart of their enemy. I am persuaded this happens but seldom, provided the devil has no share in it; they are, however, in such apprehension of magicians, that the least suspicion of exercising this profession, is sufficient to cause a person to be torn to pieces. Notwithstanding, however, the danger which attends the following this trade, there are everywhere persons who have no other. And it is even true, that the most sensible and least credulous persons, who have frequented the Indians agree, that there is sometimes more than mere conceit in their magick.

Now, Madam, is it to be thought, that these infidels are the only persons who have never had any intercourse with the devil? And what other master besides this wicked spirit, *who was a murderer from the beginning*, could have taught so many nations, who have never had any intercourse one with another, an art, which we cannot hold

<sup>3</sup>The author here confuses some of the methods of medicine men, who were held in high esteem among the tribesmen, with the detested wizards. The Jesuit missionaries considered all jugglers as allies of the evil one, and so addicted to witchcraft.



[167] as entirely imaginary, without contradicting the holy scriptures? We must therefore confess, that the infernal powers have some agents upon earth, but that God has prescribed very narrow limits to their malignity; and if he sometimes permits us to feel the effects of the power he hath thought proper to suffer them to possess, it is only in order to manifest his justice and mercy.

Much the same thing may be said of the jugglers of Canada, who profess to have no commerce but with, what they call, the benevolent genii, and by whose means they boast of knowing what passes in the most distant countries, and in the remotest futurity; of being able to discover the source and nature of the most hidden diseases, and of having the secret of curing them; to discern the part that is to be taken, in the most perplexed affairs; to explain the most obscure dreams; to make the most difficult negociations prove successful; and lastly, to render the gods propitious to warriors and hunters. These pretended good genii are like all the gods of Paganism, real devils, which received that homage which is due to God alone, and whose illusions are still more dangerous than those of the evil genii, as they contribute to retain their adorers in their blind devotion.

It is beyond all doubt, that amongst their agents the most audacious are always the most respected, who with a very little address, easily persuade nations born and brought up in superstition. And although they have seen with their own eyes the birth of those impostures, yet should they entertain a desire of ascribing to themselves a supernatural birth, they find persons credulous enough to [168] believe them on their bare word, as much as if they had seen them descend from heaven, and who look upon it as a sort of enchantment, that they formerly believed

lieved them born like other men; their artifices are, however, generally so coarse and thread-bare, that there are none besides fools and children deceived by them, except when they act in quality of physicians: for who does not know when the business in question is the recovery of one's health, that the most excessive credulity is of all countries, and even as common in such as pique themselves most on their wisdom as in those whose understandings are less enlightened?

After all, Madam, I repeat it, it is difficult not to allow, that amongst these infidels there are some things very capable of deceiving, at least, the multitude. I have heard persons say, whose veracity and wisdom I could not suspect, that when these impostors shut themselves up in a sweat-box, in order to make themselves sweat, which is one of their most common preparations for their illusions, they differ in nothing from the Pythias or sybils, as the poets represent them on the tripod: that they are seen to fall into convulsions and extacies, to assume a tone of voice, and to perform actions which appear beyond human power, and which inspire even those spectators who have the strongest disbelief of their impostures, with a horror and astonishment, which they are unable to overcome.

It is also affirmed that they suffer greatly on those occasions, and that there are some of them who are very difficultly prevailed with, and even though they have been very well paid to deliver themselves into the hands of the spirit which con- <sup>[169]</sup> vulses them. But we are not to believe that there is any thing supernatural in this, that just after coming out of those violent sweats they plunge into cold water, and even sometimes when it is frozen, without feeling the least inconvenience from it.

it.<sup>4</sup> This is common to them, with all the other Indians, and even with other northern nations.<sup>5</sup> This is an experiment, which somewhat disconcerts the science of physick, but in which the devil has certainly no manner of share.

It is also certain, that their jugglers are too often true in their predictions, to suffer us to believe that they divine at random, and that there pass on those occasions, things which it is almost impossible to account for, in any natural way. And even the very posts with which these sweat-boxes were supported, have been seen to bend to the earth, whilst the juggler remained motionless and without touching them, and whilst he sweated and foretold what was to happen. The letters of the ancient missionaries are filled with facts which leave no room to doubt, that these seducers have a real compact with the Father of deceit and lies. Several Frenchmen have told me the same thing. I shall only quote one passage which I have from the fountain-head.

You have seen at Paris, Madame de Marson, and she is there still; now this is what the Marquis de Vaudreuil, her son-in-law and our present governor, told me this winter, and which he had from this lady, who is far from being a person of a weak mind. She was one day very uneasy about M. de Marson, her husband who commanded at that time <sup>[170]</sup> in a post in Acadia; he was still absent, though the time he had fixed for his return was already

<sup>4</sup>Sweating was a remedy common to nearly every American tribe, the sweating cabin was to be found in every village. Frequently it was a mere hut or wigwam of twigs with mats or robes thrown over it as temporary covering. The steam was produced by throwing water upon heated stones. As our author indicates, this was a custom of social importance, an ingredient of hospitality, used for its pleasurable as well as its therapeutic value. It also had a religious significance. Its effect on the vitality of the Indian physique was very great.

<sup>5</sup>The poet Regnard assures us, in his voyage to Lapponia, that he has seen the same thing done in Bothnia. — CHARLEVOIX.

past.

past. An Indian woman seeing Madame de Marson uneasy, asked her the reason of it, and having learned it, told her, after musing some time on it, not to vex herself, that her husband would return such a day at such an hour, naming both, with a grey hat on his head. As she perceived the lady gave no credit to her prediction, she returned to her, at the day and hour she had assigned, and asked her whether she would not come to see her husband arrive, and pressed her so strongly to follow her, that at last she led her to the bank of the river. They had scarce arrived there, when Mons. de Marson appeared in a canoe, with a grey hat on his head; and being told what had passed, assured them, that he was utterly at a loss to conceive which way the Indian woman could know the day and hour of his arrival.

This example, Madam, with many others which I know, and which are no less certain, prove, that the devil is sometimes concerned in the magick of the Indians; but it belongs only, say they, to the jugglers to make the evocations, when the business is of publick concern. It is pretended that all the Algonquins and Abenakis, formerly, practised a kind of pyromancy, the whole mystery of which is as follows. They reduced to a very fine powder some charcoal, made of cedar, they disposed this powder in their own manner, and afterwards set fire to it, and by the form which the fire took whilst it ran along this powder, they pretended to discover what they wanted to know. They add, that the Abenakis, when they were converted to Christianity, had much difficulty in renoun-<sup>[171]</sup> cing this usage, which they looked upon as a very innocent way of knowing what passed at a distance.

I have never heard it said whether such private persons, as were inclined to possess such secrets, were under  
any

any necessity of passing any trial at their initiation; but professed jugglers are never invested with this character, by which they enter into a kind of compact with the genii, and which renders their persons venerable, till after they have prepared themselves by fastings, which they carry to a great length, during which they are incessantly beating the drum, shouting, howling, singing and smoaking. The installation is afterwards made in a kind of Bacchanalian festival with ceremonies so very extravagant and accompanied with such transports of fury, that one would imagine the devil took possession of their bodily organs, from that moment.<sup>6</sup>

They are, notwithstanding, the ministers of those pretended gods, only in as much as they make known to men their will, and serve them as interpreters; for if we might give the appellation of sacrifices, to the offerings which these nations pay to their divinities, their priests are always different from their jugglers: these in all publick ceremonies are the chiefs, and in domestick occurrences, it is generally the father of the family, or in his absence the most considerable person in the cabbin, who performs this function. But the chief occupation of the jugglers, at least that by which they get most profit is physick: they exercise this art by principles, founded on the know-<sup>[172]</sup> ledge of simples, on experience, and as is done every where else, on the circumstances of the case, but very rarely without a mixture of superstition and quackery, of which the vulgar are constantly the dupes.

There is, perhaps, no set of men in the world more inclined to these impostures, than the Indians, though there are very few who are under less necessity of having re-

<sup>6</sup>The author in this paragraph refers to initiation in the Grand Medicine societies or Mide-wiwin, common to most Algonquian tribes.



course to physick. They are not only almost all of a sound and robust constitution, but were utterly unacquainted with most of the diseases to which we are subject, before we had commerce with them. They knew not what the small-pox was when they got it from us, and we can only attribute the prodigious ravages it has made amongst them to their ignorance. The gout, the gravel, stone and apoplexy, with a number of other evils so common in Europe, are not yet known in this part of North-America, at least amongst the natives.

It is true, those excesses committed in their feasts, and in their outrageous fastings, occasion pains and weaknesses in the breast and stomach, which carry off great numbers of them; many young persons also die of the consumption, which they pretend, is a consequence of the excessive fatigue and violent exercises to which they expose themselves from their infancy, and before they are able to support them. It is a folly to believe with some, that their blood is of a colder nature than ours, and to attribute to this, their pretended insensibility in torments; but it is extremely balsamick, which proceeds, no doubt, from their not using any salt or high seasonings in their diet.

[173] They seldom look upon a disease as purely natural, and amongst the ordinary remedies which they use, there are some who have the virtue of curing simply by themselves. The great use which they make of their simples, is for the cure of wounds, fractures, dislocations, luxations and ruptures.<sup>7</sup> They blame the great incisions which our surgeons make, in order to clean wounds, they express the juice of several plants, and with this composi-

<sup>7</sup>All visitors speak of the Indians' skill in healing wounds. They knew nothing of antiseptics but by practical use had a knowledge of cleansing agents that produced such results.

tion,

tion, they draw from them all the matter and even splinters, stones, iron, and in general all extraneous bodies remaining in the wound. These very juices are also the sole nourishment of the patient till the wound is closed: he who probes it, likewise takes a draught of it before he sucks the wound, when this operation is necessary: but this rarely happens, and they most commonly content themselves with syringing the wound with this liquor.

All this is in the rules of the art, but as these people must always have something supernatural in every thing, the juggler often tears the wound with his teeth, and afterwards a bit of wood or such like matter, which he took care to conceal in his mouth, makes the sick person believe he extracted it from the wound, and that this was the charm which made his disease so dangerous. This much is certain, that they are in possession of secrets and remedies which are admirable. A broken bone is immediately set, and is perfectly solid in eight days time. A French soldier who was in garrison in a fort in Acadia, was seized with the Epilepsy, and the fits were become almost daily and extremely violent: an Indian woman that happened to be present at one of his fits, made him two boluses of a pulverised root, the name of which she did <sup>[174]</sup> not disclose, and desired that one might be given him at his next fit, told him that he would sweat much, and that he would have large evacuations both by vomiting and stool, and added, that if the first bolus did not entirely cure him, the second certainly would: the thing happened as she had foretold; the patient had, indeed, a second fit, but this was his last. He from that day enjoyed a perfect state of health.

These people have also speedy and sovereign remedies against the palsy, dropsy, and venereal complaints. The  
raspings

raspings of guaiacum<sup>8</sup> and sassafras are their common specifics against these last complaints; of these they make a draught which is both a cure and preservative, provided it be made constant use of. In acute diseases, such as the pleurisy, they fall to work on the side opposite to that where the pain is; to this they apply drawing cataplasms, and which hinder it from settling. In fevers they use cooling lotions with decoctions of herbs, and by this means prevent inflammations and deliriousness. They boast above all things of their skill in dieting, which according to them consists in abstaining from certain aliments which they reckon detrimental.<sup>9</sup>

They were formerly unacquainted with the method of bleeding, which they supplied by scarifications of the parts affected: they afterwards applied a sort of cupping-glasses made of gourds, and filled with combustible matters to which they set fire. The use of causticks, and ustulations,<sup>10</sup> were all familiar to them; but as they had no knowledge of the lunar caustick, they made use of rotten wood in its place. At present, bleeding alone is substituted instead of all <sup>[175]</sup> these. In the northern parts they made much use of glisters, a bladder was their instrument for this purpose.<sup>11</sup> They have a remedy for the bloody-flux which seldom or never fails; this is a juice expressed from the extremities of cedar branches after they have been well boiled.

But their grand remedy and preservative against all evils, is sweating. I just told you, Madam, that the mo-

<sup>8</sup> Usually spelled guaiacum, a greenish resin used in skin and other diseases, frequently prepared from *lignum vitæ*.

<sup>9</sup> There were two classes of healing agents among the Indians: first, the medicine men who used jugglery, mystery, sleight of hand, and agencies such as Charlevoix has described in the preceding paragraphs; second, the herbalists, frequently women who were skilled in simples, and plant remedies of great efficacy.

<sup>10</sup> Ustulations were searing operations used by the physicians of Charlevoix's time.

<sup>11</sup> The French word is "lavement," meaning a clyster or enema.

ment after coming out of the sweat-box, and even whilst the sweat is still running down from all parts of the body, they throw themselves into the river; if this happens to be at too great a distance, they cause themselves to be sprinkled with the coldest water. They often sweat only to refresh themselves, to calm their minds and to render them fitter for speaking on publick affairs. The moment a stranger arrives in any of their cabbins, they make a fire for him, rub his feet with oil, and immediately conduct him into a sweat-box where his host keeps him company. They have another very singular method of provoking sweat, which is made use of in certain diseases: this consists in extending the patient on a couch raised a little above the ground, under which are boiled in a kettle, the wood of the hiccéry tree and the branches of pine. The vapour which proceeds from it produces a most profuse sweat: they also pretend that the smell of it is extremely wholesome; the sweat by means of a sweat-box, and which is procured by the vapour arising from the water, poured upon red-hot flints, is without this advantage.

In Acadia no disease was thought worth their notice, till the patient had entirely lost his appe-<sup>[176]</sup> tite; and several nations are still in the same error: and whatever sort of fever a person happens to be seized with, if they incline to eat, he is never allowed any particular diet, but must eat of such food as the rest. But as soon as the disease appears dangerous, that is to say, when the person rejects all kind of nourishment, they treat it with much attention. It is true, the principles on which the science of physic among the Indians is founded, are altogether extraordinary, and they refuse a sick man nothing he asks for, from a belief that the desires of a person in this condition, are so many orders from the genius who watches  
for



for his preservation; and in calling their jugglers it is less from any persuasion of their abilities, than from a supposition that they are better able to know of the spirits, the cause of the evil, and the remedies that are to be applied for the cure of it.

They are moreover unwilling to have any thing to reproach themselves with, death seems to lose a part of its terror, even when it follows on the heels of the remedies, of which it is a natural consequence. Our Indians are in this subject to the common law of humanity, and to the general prejudice which has obtained in all ages and nations; and they are, in my opinion the more excusable, for carrying their credulity to so great a length; because, as they find something supernatural in all diseases, and as their physick consists in a mixture of religion,<sup>12</sup> they therefore believe themselves less under any obligation to reason about it; and make it a sacred duty, to abandon themselves to the guidance of blind chance.

[177] A sick person often takes it into his head that his disease is owing to witchcraft, in which case their whole attention is employed in discovering it, which is the juggler's province. This personage begins with causing himself to be sweated, and after he has quite fatigued himself with shouting, beating himself, and invoking his genius, the first out of the way thing that comes into his head, is that to which he attributes the cause of the disease. There are some who, before they enter the sweat-box, take a draught of a composition very proper, say they, for dis-

<sup>12</sup>Nearly all the medicine men or jugglers of a tribe belonged to the Mide-wiwin or Grand Medicine Society, a secret organization with many rites preserved by tradition. As our author indicates, the healing art and religious observances were indistinguishably blended. The traditions of this secret society were obtained and recorded by W. J. Hoffman in United States Bureau of Ethnology, *Seventh Annual Report*, 149-300. This writer gives a list of plants used by the Indian herbalists.



posing them to receive the divine impulse, and they pretend that the advent of the spirit, is made manifest by a rushing wind, which suddenly arises; or by a bellowing heard under ground; or by the agitation and shaking of the sweat-box. Then full of his pretended divinity, and more like a person possessed by the devil than one inspired of heaven, he pronounces in a positive tone of voice on the state of the patient, and sometimes guesses tolerably just.

The fraternity of quacks have devised a very singular method of exempting themselves from being responsible for events. As soon as they see the patient in danger of dying, they never fail to give a prescripton, the execution of which is so difficult, as to be almost impossible to perform with any degree of exactness, so that they easily find some omission to justify themselves. It is scarce conceivable what extravagancies they prescribe on those occasions; some patients they order to counterfeit madness; in certain diseases they prescribe dances, generally extreme-<sup>[178]</sup> ly lascivious, and one would almost always think, that they meant not so much to cure as to kill the patient: but what proves the power of imagination over men is, that these physicians with all their absurdities cure to the full as often as our own.

In some countries, when the patient is despaired of, they dispatch him to keep him from languishing. In the canton of Onnontagué they put to death young children who have lost their mothers before they are weaned; they even bury them alive with them, from a persuasion that no other woman could suckle them, and that they would languish away their lives;<sup>13</sup> I do not, however, know whether they have not lately renounced this barbarous

<sup>13</sup> Recounted in *Jesuit Relations*, lvii, 101.

custom.

custom. Others abandon their sick, the moment they are given over by the physicians, and leave them to die of hunger and thirst.<sup>14</sup> And some there are who, in order to hide the contortions of visage in the dying person, shut his eyes and mouth, as soon as he begins to be in agony.

In Acadia the quacks were called *Autmoins*,<sup>15</sup> and it was commonly the chief of the village who was invested with this dignity. Thus they had much more authority than the other jugglers, although they were neither possessed of greater abilities nor less impostors. When they happened to be called upon to visit a patient, they first inspected him for a considerable time, after which they breathed upon him. If this produced nothing, "of certainty," said they, "the devil is within him; he must, however, very soon [<sup>179</sup>] go out of him; but let every one be "upon his guard, as this wicked spirit will, if he can out of "spite, attack some here present." They then fell into a kind of rage, were shaken with agonies, shouted out aloud, and threatened the pretended demon; they spoke to him as if they had seen him with their eyes, made several passes at him, as if they would stab him, the whole being only intended to conceal their imposture.

On entering the cabbin they take care to fix into the ground a bit of wood, to which a cord is made fast. They afterwards present the end of the cord to the spectators inviting them at the same time to draw out the bit of wood, and as scarce any one ever succeeds in it, they are sure to tell him that it is the devil who holds it; afterwards making as if he would stab this pretended devil, they loosen by little and little the piece of wood, by raking up

<sup>14</sup>Numerous instances of abandonment of sick persons are related by the missionaries. See a typical instance in *Jesuit Relations*, xxxiii, 95.

<sup>15</sup>Usually called Aoutmoins.

the earth round it, after which they easily draw it up, the crowd all the while crying out, A miracle! To the under-part of this piece of wood, was fastened a little bone, or some such thing, which was not at first perceived, and the quacks shewing it to the company: "Behold," cried they, "the cause of the disease, it was necessary to kill the devil "to get at it."

This farce lasted three or four hours, after which the physician stood in need of rest and refreshment; he went away assuring them, that <sup>[180]</sup> the sick person would infallibly be cured, provided the disease had not already got the better, that is to say, provided the devil before his retreat, had not given him his death's wound. The business was to know whether he had or not. This the autmoin pretended to discover by dreams, but he took care never to speak clearly, till he saw what turn the disease took. On perceiving it incurable, he went away, every one likewise after his example abandoning the patient. If after three days were expired, he were still alive: "The devil," said the physician, "will neither allow him to be cured, "nor suffer him to die; you must out of charity put an end "to his days." Immediately the greatest friend of the patient went to fetch cold water and poured it upon his face till he expired. The enchantment was such, that besides making vast acknowledgements to the autmoin, for his extraordinary care and attendance, they also largely gratified him.<sup>16</sup>

Some southern nations have quite contrary maxims, and never pay the physician till after the cure is performed; and if the patient happen to die, the physician who attended him, is in danger of his life. According to the Iroquois, every disease is a desire of the soul, and people

<sup>16</sup> This incident is taken from *Jesuit Relations*, iii, 119-123.

die

die only because this desire has not been satisfied. I must now conclude, Madam, because the article of the dead would lead me too far, and because every thing is getting ready for my departure; I shall probably very soon find <sup>[181]</sup> leisure to write you again, but with very little profit to you, as from hence to the country of the Illinois, there is no likelihood of my meeting with any opportunity of forwarding my letter to you; so that if I write you before my arrival there, you will, perhaps, receive it at the same time with that I shall write you, when I am at my journey's end.

*I am, &c.*

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## LETTER TWENTY-SIXTH.

*Departure from the Fort of the River St. Joseph. Sources of the Theakiki: What passes at the Death of the Indians; of their Funerals and Tombs. Of their Mourning and Widowhood. Of the Festival of the Dead.*

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SOURCE OF THE RIVER THEAKIKI, September 17, 1721.

MADAM,

**I** DID not imagine I should have so soon taken up my pen again to write you; but my guides have just now broken their canoe, and I am detained a whole day in a place that affords nothing to attract the curiosity of a traveller, so that I cannot do better, than employ my leisure time in endeavouring to divert you.

I believe I gave you to understand in my last, that I had two routs to chuse, in order to gain the country of the Illinois; the first was by returning to lake Michigan, coasting along the southern coast, and entering the little river of Chicagou.<sup>1</sup> After ascending five or six leagues up

<sup>1</sup> Chicago was a well-known Indian site before the coming of the white men. A tradition is preserved in Draper Manuscripts 28J34, Wisconsin Historical Society, that a great battle between the Illinois and the Foxes occurred on the shore in that vicinity. Certain it is that in 1670 a prowling band of Iroquois savages captured on this site a number of Fox Indians who were hunting in this region. Kellogg, *Early Narratives*, 152. The first white men who have left a record of their visit to Chicagou were Jolliet and Marquette. They were there in 1673; the next year the latter came back and spent

this



this river, there is a passage to that of the Illinois by means <sup>[184]</sup> of two carrying places, the longest of which is not above a league and a quarter; but being informed that at this season of the year, there is not water sufficient for a canoe, I have taken the other route, which has likewise its inconveniencies, and is far from being so agreeable, but it is more certain.<sup>2</sup>

I departed yesterday from the fort of the river St. Joseph, and sailed up that river about six leagues. I went ashore on the right,<sup>3</sup> and walked a league and a quarter, first along the water-side, and afterwards across a field in an immense meadow, entirely covered with copses of wood, which produce a very fine effect; it is called *the meadow of the Buffaloes head*, because it is said a head of that animal of a monstrous size was once found there. Why might not there have been giants among the brutes? I pitched my tent on a very beautiful spot, called *the Fort of the Foxes*, because the Foxes, that is to say, the Outagamies had not long ago a village there, which was fortified after their fashion.<sup>4</sup>

This morning I walked a league farther in the meadow, having my feet almost always in the water; afterwards I met with a kind of pool or marsh which had a communication with several others of different sizes, but the largest

there the winter of 1674-75. Neither Jolliet nor Marquette used the name Chicago; to them it was the "river of the portage." The word Chicago first appears in the accounts of La Salle's expedition of 1679.

<sup>2</sup>The portage at Chicago is now superseded by the Chicago Drainage Canal. It passed from the south branch of Chicago River along its west fork towards Mud Lake, then to Summit in Lyons Township. See early map in *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, xviii, 146.

<sup>3</sup>The St. Joseph-Kankakee portage left the former river above South Bend in St. Joseph County, Indiana. For the route taken by Charlevoix see *Northern Indiana Historical Society Publications*, I, 44-48, map, page 20.

<sup>4</sup>This region was not the usual haunt of the Outagami or Foxes; it was, however, a favorite hunting ground, and during the Fox Wars, which were then raging, they had a fortified village at this advantageous spot. The St. Joseph was at first the habitat of the Miami; later as they moved eastward their place was taken by Potawatomi.

not

not above a hundred paces in circuit. These are the sources of the river *Theakiki*, which by a corrupted pronunciation our Indians call *Kiakiki*.<sup>5</sup> *Theak* signifies a wolf, in I do not remember what language, but this river bears that name, because the Mahingans, who are likewise called the wolves, had formerly taken refuge on its banks.<sup>6</sup>

[175] We put our canoe which two men had carried thus far into the second of those springs, and we embarked ourselves, but we had scarce water sufficient to keep her afloat. Ten men would in two days make a streight and navigable canal, which would save a great deal of trouble and ten or twelve leagues of way; for the river at its source is so very narrow, and such short turns must of necessity be constantly made, that there is danger of damage every moment to the canoe, as has just now happened to us. But we shall now return to the Indians, and after having seen in what manner they are treated during sickness, we shall take a view of them whilst they are a-dying, and of what passes after their death.

For the most part, when they believe themselves past hopes of recovery, they put on a resolution truly stoical, and even see their death hastened by those persons who are dearest to them, without testifying the least chagrin. No sooner has the physician pronounced sentence on a dying person, than he makes an effort to harrangue those who are about him. If he is the head of a family, he makes his funeral oration before-hand, which he concludes with giving his children the best advice he can; afterwards he

<sup>5</sup> Now the Kankakee River, the eastern source of the Illinois, originally called *Theateki* or *Teatiky*.

<sup>6</sup> Apparently this was a band of Mahican or Wolf Indians attracted by La Salle to the West when from 1680 to 1683 he attempted to build an Algonquian confederacy to resist the encroachments of the Iroquois. La Salle made the Mahican his personal attendants and hunters; after his departure from Illinois they gradually returned east.

takes his leave of every body, gives orders for a feast, in which all the provisions remaining in the cabbin must be consumed, and lastly, receives presents from his family.

While this passes, they cut the throats of all the dogs they can catch, that the souls of these animals may give information to the people in the other world, that such a person is soon coming to join them; and they throw all their bodies into the kettle in order to encrease the feast. The repast <sup>[186]</sup> being over, they begin their lamentations, which are interrupted with taking their last farewell of the dying person, wishing him a good voyage, comforting him on his separation from his friends and relations, and assuring him that his children will maintain all the glory he has acquired.<sup>7</sup>

It must be confessed, Madam, that the indifference with which these people face death, has something admirable in it; and this is so universal that an Indian has seldom been known to be uneasy, on being informed that he has but a few hours to live; the same genius and principle prevail every where, though the usages with respect to what I have been now relating vary greatly in the different nations. Dances, songs, invocations and feasts are every where prescribed by the physicians, remedies almost all of them more likely, according to our notions, to kill a man in perfect health, than to recover a sick person. In some places they are contented with having recourse to the spirits, who, if the patients recover their health, have all the honour of the cure, but the sick person is always the most unconcerned about his fate.

On the other hand, if these people show little judgement in the manner of their treating the sick, it must be

<sup>7</sup>Charlevoix has taken this description of the death of a great Acadian chief from the Jesuits. *Jesuit Relations*, ii, 17.

confessed

confessed that they behave with regard to the dead, with a generosity and an affection that cannot be too much admired. Some mothers have been known to preserve for years together the corpse of their children, and others to draw the milk from their breasts and sprinkle it on their graves. If a village in which there are any dead corpses happens to be set on fire, the first thing done is to remove them to a place of safety: they strip <sup>1871</sup> themselves of every thing most valuable about them, in order to adorn the deceased: they open their coffins from time to time, in order to change their habits; and they take victuals from their mouth, in order to carry them to their graves, and to the places where they imagine their souls resort. In a word they are much more expensive upon the dead than the living.

As soon as the sick person has fetched his last breath, the whole cabbin resounds with lamentations, which continues as long as the family is in a condition to furnish the expence; for open table must be kept during all that time. The carcass adorned with its finest robe, the face painted, the arms of the deceased, with every thing he possessed laid by his side, is exposed at the gate of the cabbin, in the same posture in which he is to lie in the tomb, and that is in many places, the same with that of a child in the womb.<sup>8</sup> It is customary among some nations for the relations of the deceased to fast till the funeral is over, all which interval is past in weeping and howling, in regaling all those who visit them, in making the eulogium of the dead, and in reciprocal compliments. Amongst other nations they hire mourners, who acquit themselves perfectly well of their duty. They sing, they dance and weep incessantly, and

<sup>8</sup>This flexed position is very frequent in Indian burials. The origin of the custom is doubtless that related by Charlevoix. See also *Jesuit Relations*, i, 165.

always



always in cadence; but this outward show of borrowed grief is not prejudicial to that which nature exacts, from the relations of the deceased.

It appears to me that they carry the corpse to the place of burial without any ceremony, at least I have found nothing upon this head in any relation, but when they are once in the grave, they take care to cover them in such manner that the earth does not <sup>[188]</sup> touch them: so that they lie as in a cell entirely covered with skins, much richer and better adorned than any of their cabbins. A post is afterwards erected, on which they fix every thing capable of expressing the esteem in which they held the deceased. His portrait is sometimes placed upon it, with whatever else can serve to make passengers acquainted with his state and condition, and signify the most remarkable actions of his life. Fresh provisions are carried to the place every morning, and as the dogs and other beasts do not fail to take advantage of this, they would fain persuade themselves that it is the soul of the deceased, who comes to take some refreshment.<sup>9</sup>

After this, it is not to be wondered at if the Indians believe in apparitions: in fact they have numberless stories of that kind. I have seen a poor man, who merely by the strength of hearing them talked of, imagined he had always a troop of dead men at his heels; and as people took a pleasure in terrifying him, he at last became stark mad. After, however, a certain term of years, they use as much precaution to efface the remembrances of those they have lost from their minds, as they had before taken care to

<sup>9</sup>An Indian cemetery presented an interesting appearance; among Algonquian tribes a small hut or pent roof was built over the body, one end of which was open to insert offerings of food, while from the ridge there floated clothing and strips of cloth, wampum, ribbon, and other precious gifts. Peter Pond describes such decorated poles in a Wisconsin village as an offering to the god of pestilence. *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, xviii, 337.



preserve it, and this they do entirely to put an end to the grief they felt on that occasion.<sup>10</sup>

Some of our missionaries asked of their converts, one day, why they deprived themselves of the most necessary things in favour of their dead? "It is," answered they, "not only to testify to our neighbours the love we bore them, but likewise to prevent our having always before our eyes, objects, which being constantly used by them, must incessantly renew our grief." It is likewise [189] for this reason, they refrain during a certain time from mentioning their names; and that, if any other of the family hears it, he quits it all the time the mourning continues. This likewise is probably the reason, why the highest affront that can be offered to any one, is to tell him: *Your father is dead, or Your mother is dead.*

When an Indian dies in the time of hunting, his body is exposed on a very high scaffold, where it remains till the departure of the company, who carry it with them to the village.<sup>11</sup> There are some nations who have the same custom, with respect to all their dead; and I have seen it practised among the Missisaguez at the Narrows. The bodies of those who are killed in war are burnt, and the ashes carried back, in order to be deposited in the sepulchres of their ancestors. These sepulchres, among those nations who are best fixed in their settlements, are a sort of burial grounds near the village.<sup>12</sup> Others inter their dead in the woods at the foot of some tree,<sup>13</sup> else dry them,

<sup>10</sup>See *ibid.*, 343–344, how Pond removed the marks of mourning from an Indian acquaintance.

<sup>11</sup>Aerial burial, that is in a tree or a scaffold, was not only in use during hunting parties but was the custom among certain clans, and even entire tribes. Scaffold burial was very common among the Dakota tribe.

<sup>12</sup>Cremation was less usual than other forms of disposing of the dead, except on long war expeditions, when the transportation of the bodies was difficult.

<sup>13</sup>Inhumation was the commonest mode of burial among most of the Indian tribes.

and

and preserve them in boxes till the festival of the dead, of which I shall presently say somewhat; but in some other places, a ceremonial ridiculous enough is put in practice, with respect to those who have been drowned or starved to death by the cold.

Before I enter on the description of it, it will be proper to take notice, Madam, that the Indians believe when such accidents happen, that the souls are angry, and will not be appeased till the bodies are found. Then the preliminaries of weeping, dancing, singing and feasting being first over, the body is carried to the burial-place, or if that is at too great a distance, to the place where it is to re-<sup>[190]</sup>main till the festival of the dead. A very large ditch is dug here, and a fire kindled. Then the young men approach the carcass, cut the flesh from those parts which had been marked out by the master of the ceremonies, and throw it into the fire, together with the bowels. During this whole operation, the women and especially the relations of the deceased, continue turning round those who are at work, exhorting them to acquit themselves well of their duty, and putting grains of porcelain in their mouths; as we do sugar plums in the mouths of children, when we would have them do any particular thing.<sup>14</sup>

The burial is followed by presents, which are made to the family afflicted, and this is called *covering the dead*. These presents are made in name of the village, and sometimes in that of the nation. The allies likewise send presents at the death of considerable persons. But before this, the family of the deceased make a feast in his name, accompanied with games, for which prizes are proposed. There are a sort of justs or tournaments carried on in this

<sup>14</sup>This custom of peculiar burial for the drowned is described in *Jesuit Relations*, i, 265.

manner:

manner: one of their chiefs throws upon the tomb three batons, about a foot in length, a young man, a woman and a girl take each of them one, and those of the same age, sex and condition endeavour to wrest them out of their hands. The persons with whom they remain are reckoned the conquerors. There are likewise races, and sometimes they shoot at a mark; in a word, by a custom established through all Pagan antiquity, an action wholly melancholy in itself, concludes with songs and shouts of victory.

It is true, the family of the deceased take no part in these rejoicings; but on the contrary ob- <sup>[191]</sup> serve in their cabbin after the obsequies are over, a mourning the laws of which are very severe. They must have their hair cut off, and their faces blacked; they must have their head in an erect posture, their head wrapped up in a covering, without looking upon any one, making any visits, or eating any thing hot; but must deprive themselves of all pleasures, having scarce any cloathing on their bodies, and never warming themselves, even in the midst of winter.<sup>15</sup> After this grand mourning they begin another more moderate, which lasts for two or three years longer, but which may yet be mitigated a little; but nothing prescribed is ever dispensed with, without the permission of the cabbin, to which the widow and widower belong; and these permissions as well as the conclusion of the mourning, are always attended with a feast.

Lastly, they are not at liberty, by the laws of widowhood, to engage in second nuptials, without the consent of those on whom they depend. And should there be no husband found for the widow, she is very little concerned

<sup>15</sup>Mourning on the part of a widow usually lasted for a year, during which time among the Chippewa she was expected to carry a bundle supposed to represent her deceased husband.

about it, in case she has male children old enough to provide for her support; she may still remain in the state of widowhood without fear of being reduced to want. If she has a mind to marry again, she is at liberty to chuse for herself, and the person she marries becomes the father to her former children, enters into all the rights, and is subject to all the obligations of the first husband. A husband never weeps for the loss of a wife; tears in the opinion of the Indians, being looked upon as unworthy of men; but this does not hold true amongst all the nations.

The women, on the contrary, bewail their husbands a year, are eternally invoking him, and fill the villages with their cries and lamentations, and <sup>[192]</sup> especially at the rising and setting of the sun, at noon, and in some parts when they go forth to their labour or return from it. Mothers mourn in much the same manner for their children. The chiefs mourn for six months only, after which they are free to marry again.

Lastly, the first and oftentimes the only salutation paid to a friend and even to a stranger on his entering their cabbins, is to bewail the relations they lost since they last saw them.<sup>16</sup> They lay their hand on his head and signify the person they lament, but without naming him. This is entirely founded on nature, and savours nothing of the barbarian; but what I am going to relate to you appears inexcusable in every respect. This is the conduct which these nations observe, with regard to all who have died a violent death, even in war and in the service of their country.

They have taken it into their heads, that the souls of these persons in the other world, have no commerce with

<sup>16</sup>In all important Indian councils the first business undertaken was public mourning for any noted member of the tribe lately deceased. The white commandants and governors followed this custom in dealing with their Indian allies.



the rest; and on this principle they burn them or bury them immediately, and even sometimes before they are quite dead.<sup>17</sup> They never lay them in the common burying-ground, and allow them no share in the grand ceremony, which is repeated every eight years among some nations, and every ten years amongst the Hurons and Iroquois.

This is called the festival of the dead, or of souls.<sup>18</sup> The following is what I have been able to collect, and is the most uniform as well as most remarkable account, of this most singular and extraordinary act of religion known amongst the Indians. They begin with agreeing upon the place where the <sup>[193]</sup> assembly is to be held, afterwards they make choice of a king of the feast, whose business is to take order for every thing, and to invite the neighbouring villages. On the day appointed they assemble, and go in procession, two and two to the burial-place; there every one falls to work to uncover the dead bodies, and afterwards they remain some time in silent contemplation of a spectacle, so capable of furnishing the most serious reflections. The women are the first who break this religious silence, by raising lamentable cries, which still add to the horror with which every spectator is seized.

This first act ended, they take up the carcasses and gather the dry and loose bones, with which they load the persons who are appointed to carry them. They wash such bodies as are not entirely corrupted, take away the putrid flesh with all other filth from them, and wrap them

<sup>17</sup>On this subject see *Jesuit Relations*, xxxix, 31.

<sup>18</sup>The feast for the dead is one of the oldest and most interesting customs among North American aborigines. Its usual period was twelve years, but this was not a fixed time. It depended upon the convenience of the community. Some of the features of this festival remind one of the Homeric games at the great gatherings of primitive Greeks. See Kellogg, *Early Narratives*, 20-21.



in new robes of beaver skins. Afterwards they return in the same order they came, and when the procession reaches the village, each person deposits his load in his own cabin. During the march, the women continue their wailings, and the men wear the same marks of grief, as on the day of the death of the person whose remains they are thus carrying. This second act is followed with a feast in each cabin, in honour of the dead of the family.

On the following days there are publick feastings, which are accompanied, as on the day of the interment, with dances, games, and combats; for which there are also prizes proposed. From time to time they raise certain cries, which they call the cries of the souls. They make presents to the strangers amongst whom there are sometimes persons who have come a hundred and fifty leagues off, <sup>[194]</sup> and receive presents again from them.<sup>19</sup> They even make use of these opportunities to treat of their common affairs, as the election of a chief: all passes with a great deal of order, decency and modesty; and every person present appears filled with sentiments proper to the occasion; every thing, even the very dances and songs, breathe such a sorrowful air, that the heart is penetrated with the most lively sorrow, so that the most indifferent person must be struck at the sight of this spectacle.

After some days have past, they go in procession to a large council-room built on purpose, where they hang up against the walls the bones and carcasses, in the same condition in which they were taken up, and they display the presents destined for the dead. If amongst the rest there happen to be the remains of some chief, his successor gives a grand repast in his name, and sings his song.

<sup>19</sup>On one occasion among the Hurons two thousand assembled to participate in the games and contests of the feast for the dead. *Jesuit Relations*, xxiii, 209-223.

In several places the dead bodies are carried from canton to canton, where they are always received with great demonstrations of grief and tenderness, and every where presents are made them: lastly, they carry them to the place where they are to remain for eternity. But I forgot to tell you, that all these processions are to the sound of instruments, accompanied with the finest voices, and that every person observes an exact cadence in his motion.

This last and common place of burial, is a great ditch lined with the finest furs and with whatever is most precious. The presents destined for the dead are placed apart, and in proportion as the procession arrives, each family places itself on a kind of scaffolds erected around the ditch. The moment the dead bodies are deposited, the women begin <sup>[195]</sup> their cries and lamentations. Afterwards all the spectators go down into the ditch, when every one takes a small quantity of earth which he preserves with the greatest care, from a belief that it brings good luck at play. The dead bodies and bones are placed in proper order, being covered with new furs, over which is a layer of bark, and above all are thrown stones, timber and earth. Every one afterwards retires to his own home, but the women continue to return for several days to the same place, to deposite some sagamity by way of food for the departed.<sup>20</sup>

*I am, &c.*

<sup>20</sup>The Grand and Little Buttes des Morts on Fox River near Neenah and Oshkosh originated in communal burials like those herein described.

## LETTER TWENTY-SEVENTH.

*Voyage to Pimiteouy. Of the river of the Illinois; Reception of prisoners of war amongst that people. Manner of burning them. Some particulars of their manner of living.*

PIMITEOUY, Oct. 5, 1721.

MADAM,

ON the night between the 17th and 18th of last month, the frost, which for eight days before had been pretty sensible every morning, was considerably encreased; this was early for the climate in which we were, it being in 40 deg. 40 min. north latitude. The following days we continued our voyage, sailing from morning till night, being favoured by a pretty strong current, and sometimes by the wind; we made, indeed, a great deal of way, but yet advanced very little in our course; after having sailed ten or twelve leagues, we often found ourselves so near our last encampment, that from the one place to the other we could have seen one another, or even conversed together at least by means of a speaking trumpet.

[198] We were a little comforted for this inconvenience by the extreme plenty of game on the river and its banks, which were fattened by the wild oats then in their maturity. I likewise gathered some ripe grapes, of the size and figure

figure of a musket-ball, and sufficiently tender, but of a bad relish. These are, to all appearance, the same with what are called *Prune Grapes* in Louisiana. The river, by degrees, takes a straiter course, but its banks are not pleasant till at the distance of fifty leagues from its source. It is even throughout that whole space very narrow, and as it is bordered with trees which have their roots in the water, when any one happens to fall it bars up the whole river, and a great deal of time is lost in clearing a passage for a canoe.

All these difficulties being passed, the river at the distance of fifty leagues from its source, forms a small lake,<sup>1</sup> after which it grows considerably broader. The country becomes beautiful, consisting of unbounded meadows, where buffaloes are to be seen grazing in herds of two or three hundred; but here it is necessary to keep a good look out, for fear of being surprized by the Sioux and Outagamies, whom the neighbourhood of the Illinois, their mortal enemies, draws hither, and who give no more quarter to those French whom they happen to meet in their way. The misfortune is, that the Theakiki loses in depth, in proportion as it encreases in breadth, so that we were often obliged to unload the canoe and travel on foot, which is never done without some danger, by which means I should have been greatly embarrassed, if I had not been furnished with an escorte at the river St. Joseph.

[199] I was not a little surprized at seeing so little water in the Theakiki, notwithstanding it receives a good many pretty large rivers, one of which is more than 120 feet in breadth at its mouth, and has been called the *River of the Iroquois*, because some of that nation were surprized on its banks by the Illinois, who killed a great

<sup>1</sup> English Lake at the mouth of Yellow River, Indiana, is probably the one indicated here.

many

many of them. This check mortified them so much the more, as they held the Illinois in great contempt, who indeed for the most part are not able to stand before them.<sup>2</sup>

The 27th of September we arrived at the *Forks*, that being the name given by the Canadians to the place where the Theakiki and the river of the Illinois join. This last, notwithstanding it is sixty leagues from its source is still so very shallow, that I have seen a buffalo cross it, without being up to the mid-leg in water. The Theakiki on the contrary, besides, that it brings its waters from the distance of a hundred leagues, is a most beautiful river. Here, however, it loses its name, without doubt, because the Illinois having settled it in several places from the other, have communicated to it their own.<sup>3</sup> Being enriched all of a sudden with this junction, it does not yield in largeness to any of our rivers in France; and, I can assure you, Madam, it is not possible to behold a finer and a better country than this which it waters, at least as far as the place from whence I write. But it does not acquire a depth correspondent to its breadth, till fifteen leagues below the Forks; though in that interval many other rivers fall into it.

The largest of these is called *Pisticoui*,<sup>4</sup> and proceeds from the fine country of the Mascotins.<sup>5</sup> At its mouth is

<sup>2</sup>This defeat was probably that of 1653, when the Iroquois repulsed from a fort on the shores of Green Bay retreated in two divisions, of which the southern was seriously harassed by the Illinois. Blair, *Indian Tribes*, I, 151-157.

<sup>3</sup>The name Des Plaines, now given to the northern fork of the Illinois River, does not appear on the maps until some time after Charlevoix's visit. The stream was called the Illinois as far as its northeastern source. Des Plaines took its name from the soft swamp maples that grew on its banks.

<sup>4</sup>Now the Fox River of Illinois. Its early name is preserved in Lake Pistoakee, which lies near its source in Lake County, Illinois. The word Pisticoui meant buffalo.

<sup>5</sup>The Mascouten, when first encountered by the whites, were dwelling on the upper Fox River of Wisconsin, near the present town of Berlin. When La Salle built Fort St. Louis, the Mascouten moved southward, in order to be near the trading post. After Charlevoix's day they removed to the Wabash, where gradually the tribe merged with others, notably the Kickapoo and the Ouiatanon.

a fall,



a fall, or a rapid stream, which is <sup>[200]</sup> called *le Charbonnière*, or the *Coal-pit*, from the great quantity of sea coal found in the places adjacent.<sup>6</sup> Nothing is to be seen in this course but immense meadows, interspersed with small copses of wood, which seem to have been planted by the hand; the grass is so very high that a man is lost amongst it, but paths are every where to be found as well trodden as they could have been in the best peopled countries, though nothing passes that way excepting buffaloes, and from time to time some herds of deer, and a few roe-buck.

A league below the coal-pit you see a rock on the right, entirely round, extremely high, and its summit in the form of a terrace; this is called the *Fort of the Miamis*, because these Indians had formerly a village there.<sup>7</sup> A league beyond this on the left, is seen another rock, quite similar to the former, and which has got the simple appellation of *the Rock*.<sup>8</sup> This is the point of a very high plateau, stretching the space of two hundred paces, and bending or winding with the course of the river which is very broad in this place. This rock is steep on all sides, and at a distance one would take it for a fortress. Some remains of a palisado are still to be seen on it, the Illinois having formerly cast up an entrenchment here, which might be easily repaired in case of any irruption of the enemy.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Jolliet remarked this vein of coal, and on his map of 1674 places at this point the term "Charbon de terre."

<sup>7</sup> This was one of the villages which was formed at the time of La Salle's great confederacy in 1683. See Kellogg, *Early Narratives*, 305; Parkman, *La Salle*, 294-298. It probably stood on what was called Buffalo Rock, some distance above Starved Rock.

<sup>8</sup> This famous site, called "le Rocher" during the French régime, is now called Starved Rock. It is on the left bank of the Illinois, near Utica.

<sup>9</sup> Apparently Charlevoix did not know that this was the site of La Salle's and Tonti's Fort St. Louis. This post built in 1683 was abandoned in 1690 for a site on Lake Peoria. See Alvord, *History of Illinois* (Springfield, 1920), 100.

The village of these Indians stands at the foot of this rock in an island, which, together with several others, all of a wonderful fertility, divides the river in this place into two pretty large channels. I went ashore here in the evening about four o'clock, where I met with some of my countrymen, who were trading with the Indians. I had scarce landed <sup>[201]</sup> when I received a visit from the chief of the village, who is a man of about forty years of age, well-made, of a mild temper, a good countenance, and very well spoken of by the French.

I afterwards went up to this rock by a pretty easy, but very narrow ascent. I found here a very level terrace, and of a great extent, where twenty men might defend themselves against all the Indians of Canada, provided they had fire-arms, and could be supplied with water; but that is only to be had from the river, and to obtain it they would be obliged to expose themselves. The only resource of the besieged would be the natural impatience of those barbarians. In small parties they will wait with pleasure for eight or ten days behind a bush, in the hope that some one may pass, whom they may kill or take prisoner; but, in large bodies, if they do not succeed at the first, they are soon tired, and lay hold of the first pretence to retire, which is never wanting, a dream, real or pretended, being all that is necessary for that purpose.

The rain, and much more a spectacle which struck me with horror, prevented me from making the tour of these rocks, from whence I imagined I should discover an extensive country. I perceived at the extremity, and immediately above the village, the bodies of two Indians who had been burnt a few days before, and whom they had left according to custom, to be devoured by the birds, in the same posture in which they were executed. The man-  
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ner of burning prisoners amongst these southern nations is somewhat singular, and they have some customs different from the others in their manner of treating those unhappy wretches.

[202] When they have met with success in any military expedition, the warriors contrive their march in such a manner, that they always arrive at the village in the evening. As soon as they are come near it, they halt, and when night is come, depute two or three young people to the chief, to inform him of the principal events of the campaign. On the morrow at day-break they attire their prisoners in new robes, dress their hair with down, paint their faces with different colours, and put into their hands a white staff surrounded with the tails of deer. At the same time, the war-chief shouts, and the whole village assembles at the water-side, provided it happens to be near a river.

As soon as the warriors appear, four young persons well-dressed embark on board a *Pirogue*,<sup>10</sup> the two first carry each of them a calumet, and proceed singing at the same time to fetch the prisoners whom they conduct as in triumph to the cabbin where they are to be judged.<sup>11</sup> The master of the cabbin, to whom it belongs to determine their fate, begins with giving them to eat, and holds a council during the repast. In case they grant any one his life, two young persons untie him, and take him each by a hand, and so make him run with all his might towards the river, into which they throw him headlong. They also throw themselves into it after him, and when they have well washed him, conduct him to the person whose slave he is to be.

<sup>10</sup>This is a long sort of boat made of the trunk of a single tree. Canoes of bark are seldom made use of in these parts. — CHARLEVOIX.

<sup>11</sup>Frequently the captured prisoner was forced by his captors to sing as he approached a village.

As for those who are condemned to die, as soon as sentence is pronounced, the cry is made to assemble <sup>[203]</sup> the village, and the execution is put off no longer than till the necessary preparations are made. They begin with stripping the sufferer stark naked; they fix two posts in the ground, to which they make fast two cross pieces, one two foot from the ground, and the other six or seven feet higher, and this is what they call a square. They cause the person who is to suffer to mount the first cross piece, to which they tie his feet at some distance from each other; they afterwards bind his hands to the two angles formed by the upper cross-piece, and in this posture they burn him in all the different parts of his body.

The whole village, men, women, and children crowd round him, every one being at liberty to insult and torment him at pleasure. If none of the spectators happen to have any particular reason to prolong his torments, his sufferings are soon over, and the common way is to dispatch him with arrows, or else they cover him with bark to which they set fire. They then leave him to himself in his square, and in the evening visit all the cabbins, striking with rods against the furniture, walls, and roof, in order to frighten the soul from harbouring there, to revenge the mischiefs they have done his body. The rest of the night passes in rejoicing.

If the party hath met with no enemy, or if they have been obliged to fly, they enter the village in the day-time, observing a profound silence; but if they have been beaten, they make their entry in the evening, after having given notice of their return by a death cry, and named all those they have lost, either by sickness or the sword of the enemy. Sometimes the prisoners are judged and executed before <sup>[204]</sup> they arrive at the village, and especially,



ly, if they have any grounds to fear their being rescued. Some time ago, a Frenchman having been taken by the Outagamies, these barbarians held a council on their march to determine what they should do with him. The result of their deliberation was to throw a stick upon a tree, and if it remained there to burn the prisoner, but not to throw it above a certain number of times. Happily for the captive, the stick fell always to the ground, though the tree was extremely bushy.

I remained twenty-four hours at the rock, and to oblige the savages, and to testify an entire confidence in them, though all my guides encamped on the other side of the river, I lay in a cabin in the middle of the village. I passed the night quietly enough, but was very early awaked by a woman that dwelt in the neighbouring cabin; on her awakening, she happened to call to mind the remembrance of a son she had lost some years before, and she immediately fell a weeping or singing in a very mournful tone.

The Illinois have the character of bold and dexterous thieves, which is the reason why I caused transport all the baggage to the other side of the river; but in spite of this precaution, and the watchfulness of my people, when we came to set out we found a musquet and some other trifles wanting, which we could never afterwards, by any means recover. The same evening we passed the last part of the river, where you are obliged to carry your canoe;<sup>12</sup> from this place forwards, it is every where, both in breadth and deepness equal to most great rivers in Europe.

[205] On this day, likewise, I saw parrots for the first time; there are some it is true, on the banks of the Theaki-ki, but only in the summertime; but these I now saw were

<sup>12</sup> The last riffle on the Illinois was at the place called Little Rocks, just above the mouth of Vermillion River.



only stragglers on their passage to the Mississippi, where they are found at all seasons of the year. They are no bigger than a blackbird, their head is yellow, with a red spot in the middle; in the rest of their plumage green is the predominant colour.<sup>13</sup> The two following days we crossed a charming country, and on the third of October towards noon found ourselves at the entrance of Lake Pimiteouy; this is a widening of the river, which, for three leagues is a league in breadth.<sup>14</sup> At the end of these three leagues you find on the right a second village of the Illinois, fifteen leagues distant from that of the rock.<sup>15</sup>

Nothing can be more delightful than its situation; opposite to it is the prospect of a most beautiful forest, which was then adorned with all the variety of colours, and behind it is a plain of an immense extent, skirted with woods. The lake and river swarm with fish, and the banks of both with game. I likewise met in this village four French Canadians, who informed me, that I was between four parties of enemies, and that I could neither go backwards nor forwards with safety; they also told me, that on the way I had come there was an ambuscade of thirty Outagamies, that an equal number of the same Indians were hovering about the village of Pimiteouy, and that another body, to the number of fourscore, were posted lower down the river in two companies.

[206] This account made me reflect on what had past the evening before; we had stopt at the extremity of an

<sup>13</sup> All the early travelers speak of parroquets in the Ohio and Illinois valleys. The species seems to be now extinct or driven away.

<sup>14</sup> Peoria Lake.

<sup>15</sup> This village, on the north shore of Peoria Lake about a mile and a half from its outlet, was the site of the second Fort St. Louis or Fort Pimitoui, built in 1691-92 by Tonti. This post was abandoned about 1706, and had no doubt fallen into complete decay before Charlevoix's visit.

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island to look for bustards on which some of my guides had fired; and we heard somebody cutting wood in the middle of the island. The nearness of the village of Pimiteouy made us of opinion that this must be some of the Illinois, and we were pleased with this thought; but there is a strong likelihood that these were some Outagamies, who having discovered us, and not daring to attack us, as I had twelve men well armed, had a mind to draw some of us into the wood, concluding probably they would easily manage the rest; but our little curiosity saved us from this misfortune, which I should certainly not have shunned, if my escort had not been commanded by a man who had no mind to any idle delays.

What confirmed us still the more in the belief of the four Frenchmen, is that thirty warriors of Pimiteouy, and these too commanded by the chief of the village, were in the field, to try to get more certain information of the enemy, and that a few days before their departure, there had been a sharp action in the neighbourhood, in which the two parties had taken each one prisoner; the Outagami had been burnt at the distance of a musket-shot from the village, and was still in his square. The Canadians who were present at his execution, told me it had lasted six hours, and that this unhappy person maintained to his last breath that he was an Illinois, and had been taken when a child by the Outagamies, who had adopted him.

He had however fought with extreme valour; and had it not been for a wound he received in one <sup>[207]</sup> of his legs, he had not been taken; but as he could give no proofs for what he advanced, and been very near making his escape, they did not chuse to credit him on his word. In the midst of his torments he made it appear, that bravery and the courage to endure pain, are two very different virtues,  
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and not always found in one and the same person; for he sent forth lamentable shrieks, which served only to animate his tormentors: it is true, an old Illinois woman, whose son had been formerly killed by the Outagamies, did him all the mischief that fury inspired by revenge could invent; at last, however, taking pity on his cries, they covered him with straw, to which they set fire, and as he was still found to breathe after this was consumed, he was pierced with arrows by the children: for the most part, when a victim does not die like a brave man, he receives his death's wound from a woman or from children; he is unworthy, say they, to die by the hands of men.

In the mean time, Madam, I found myself very much embarrassed. On the one hand, my guides did not imagine it prudent to advance any farther; and on the other it was very inconvenient for me to winter at Pimiteouy. I should even have been obliged to follow the Indians to their winter encampment, by which means I should have lost a whole year. But at last two of the four Canadians I found at Pimiteouy, having offered to join our escort, every one took heart. I determined to set out on the morrow, being the 4th of October; but the rain and some other things that happened prevented me all that day.

[208] In the afternoon the warriors who had gone out on the discovery returned, without raising any shouts, because they had seen nothing. They all filed off before me with a pretty fierce air, being armed only with arrows and a buckler of buffaloes' hide,<sup>16</sup> and made not the least ap-

<sup>16</sup>Shields were not much used by the eastern Algonquian; the Illinois, however, living in the buffalo country used them as most Plains Indians do. The making of the shield was an act of ceremony. They were usually round and covered with the toughest portion of the hide from the neck of a buffalo bull. Frequently the shields were decorated with signs designed to act as "medicine," to protect the wearer. These signs were often chosen as the result of a dream.

pearance of seeing me; for it is a custom among the warriors not to take notice of any body whilst they are in an armed body; but scarce had every one returned to his cabin, when the chief came to pay me a visit of ceremony. He is a man of about forty years of age, of a good stature, a little thin, of a mild disposition, and extreme good sense. He is, besides, the best soldier of the nation, and there are none of the Illinois who better deserve the surname of *ποδας ωκυς*, which Homer gives by way of preference to the hero of his Iliad, than he.<sup>17</sup> This is saying a great deal, for the Illinois are perhaps the swiftest footed people in the world; and there are none but the Missouris who can dispute this piece of excellence with them.<sup>18</sup>

Perceiving a cross of copper and a small image of the Virgin suspended at the neck of this Indian, I imagined he had been a Christian, but was informed it was quite otherwise, and that he had dressed himself in that manner only to do me honour: I was likewise told a story, which I am now going to relate to you, without desiring you should give it any more credit than its authors deserve, who were Canadian travellers, who assuredly have not invented it, but have heard it affirmed for a certain fact.

The image of the Virgin which this Indian carried about with him having fallen into his hands, I [<sup>209</sup>] know not how, he was curious to know what it represented: he was told that it was the mother of God, and that the child she held in her arms was God himself, who had made himself man for the salvation of the human species: the mystery

<sup>17</sup>The "swift-footed Achilles" is herein indicated.

<sup>18</sup>The Missouri were a branch of the Siouan people, closely allied to the Iowa and the Oto. Their residence in historic times was in the trans-Mississippi, usually on the river of their name. The word Missouri was of Illinois origin; it is said to mean "muddy." The Missouri Indians called themselves Niutachi. In 1885 only forty of this tribe were living among their kinsmen the Oto.



of this ineffable incarnation was explained to him in a few words, and he was further told, that in all dangers the Christians constantly addressed themselves to this holy mother, who seldom failed to extricate them. The Indian listened to this discourse with a great deal of attention, and sometime afterwards being hunting by himself in the woods, an Outagami, who had been lying in ambush came upon him just as he had discharged his piece, and levelled it at his head. Then recollecting what he had been told about the Mother of God, he invoked her protection, and the Outagami endeavouring to discharge his piece it missed fire. He cocked it a second time, but the same thing happened five times running. In the mean time, the Illinois having loaded his piece, levelled in his turn at the head of his enemy, who chose rather to surrender than to suffer himself to be shot. Ever since this adventure, the Illinois chief will never stir out of the village without carrying his safeguard with him, by means of which he believes himself invulnerable. If this fact be true, there is good reason to believe that it has only been thro' the neglect of the missionary that he has not as yet become a Christian, and that the Mother of God having thus preserved him from a temporal death, will likewise procure him the grace of a sincere conversion.<sup>19</sup>

[210] Scarce had the chief left me, when going abroad myself, in order to visit the neighbourhood about the village, I perceived two Indians going about from cabin to cabin, and making lamentations nearly in the same manner with the woman of the rock, whom I have already mentioned to you. The one had lost his friend in the last expedition, and the other was the father of the deceased. They walked at a great rate, laying both their hands on

<sup>19</sup>He has in reality been since converted. — CHARLEVOIX.

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the heads of all they met, probably to invite them to partake in their grief. Those who have sought for resemblances between the Hebrews and Americans, undoubtedly would not have failed to take notice of this manner of weeping, which from some expressions in the scriptures, these hunters after conjectures might have had room to imagine had been in use amongst the people of God.

Towards evening the chief sent me an invitation to meet him at a house where one of the missionaries had lodged some years before,<sup>20</sup> where probably they used to hold their councils; I went thither and found him with two or three of the elders. He began with telling me that he wanted to inform me of the greatness of the danger to which I should expose myself by continuing my journey; and that after having well considered every thing, he advised me to suspend my departure till the season of the year should be a little farther advanced, in the hopes that the parties of the enemy might in the meantime withdraw and leave the way open. Suspecting that he might have his views in detaining me at Pimiteouy, I gave him to understand that his reasons had no great weight with me, and added that I had still more cogent ones to hasten my departure. My answer seemed to give him pain, and [211] I soon perceived that it proceeded entirely from his affection to me, and his zeal for our nation.

“Since your resolution is fixed,” said he to me, “I am of opinion that all the Frenchmen here should join you, in order to strengthen your convoy. I have already de-

<sup>20</sup>The mission on Lake Peoria was founded about 1693 by Fathers Jacques Gravier, who remained at this place for many years. In 1698 Fathers Pinet and Binneteau likewise dwelt at this mission. Kellogg, *Early Narratives*, 350-351. In 1706 there was a revolt among the Illinois against both the French and the missionaries. Father Gravier was seriously wounded, and the mission was abandoned. It was reestablished in 1711, but had again been deserted before Charlevoix's visit.

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“clared my sentiments to them on this head, and have  
 “represented to them in a very strong manner, that they  
 “should for ever lose their honour if they suffered their  
 “father to expose himself to such danger without partak-  
 “ing it with him. I earnestly wish I could accompany you  
 “myself at the head of all my soldiers, but you are not ig-  
 “norant that my village is every day on the eve of being  
 “attacked, and it is not proper that in such a juncture I  
 “should either be absent myself, or leave it unprovided  
 “of defence. As to the French, nothing can detain them  
 “here but a piece of self-interest, which they ought to  
 “sacrifice to the care of your preservation. This is what I  
 “have given them to understand, and I have added that  
 “if any one of them should fall into the hands of the ene-  
 “my, it would only be the loss of a single man, whereas a  
 “Father is himself alone worth many, and that there is  
 “nothing which they ought not to hazard, in order to pre-  
 “vent so great a misfortune.”

I was charmed, Madam, with the good sense of this man, and still more with his generosity, which carried him so far as, out of regard for me, to dispense with the assistance of four men, which ought not to have been indifferent to him in the situation wherein he then was. I have not even doubted <sup>[ 212 ]</sup> that he wanted to keep me with him, in order to profit by my escort for his defence. I made him a great many acknowledgments for his care and good intentions towards me, and assured him that I was very well satisfied with the French, two of whom I should leave with him for his defence, and that the other two should accompany me till I should be in a place of safety, and that with this reinforcement I believed I was in a condition to travel over all the country without fear of any thing. He insisted no farther, and I retired.

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This morning he came to pay me a second visit, attended by his mother-in-law, who carried a little infant in her arms. "You see before you," said he, addressing himself to me, "a father in great affliction. Behold my daughter who is a-dying, her mother having already lost her life in bringing her into the world, and none of our women have been able to succeed in making her take any nourishment. She throws up every thing she swallows, and has perhaps but a few hours to live: you will do me a great favour if you will baptize her, that she may see God after her death." The child was indeed very ill, and appeared to be past all hopes of recovery, so that without any hesitation I performed the ceremony of baptism on her.<sup>21</sup>

Should my voyage in every other respect be entirely fruitless, I own to you, Madam, I should not regret all the danger and fatigue I have undergone, since, in all probability, had I not been at Pimiteouy, this child would never have entered into the kingdom of heaven, where I make no doubt but it will soon be. I even hope this little angel will obtain for her father the same grace which he has pro-<sup>[ 213 ]</sup> cured for her. I shall set out in an hour, and have given this letter to the two Frenchmen whom I leave here, and who are resolved to lay hold of the first opportunity to return to Canada.

*I am, &c.*

<sup>21</sup> The earliest missionaries baptized dying infants in order that they might send them to Paradise; this custom made the Indians believe that the "Black robes" used some magic to make children die. In this case the Indian father seems to have been instructed in Christianity. Unless the missionary was reasonably certain that death was imminent he would not baptize a pagan child.

## LETTER TWENTY-EIGHTH.

*Voyage from Pimiteouy to Kaskasquias. Course of the River of the Illinois. Of the Copper Mines. Of the Missouri. Of the Mines of the River Marameg. Description of Fort Chartres, and of the Mission of Kaskasquias. Of the Fruit-trees of Louisiana. Description of the Mississippi above the Illinois. Different Tribes of that Nation. Some Traditions of the Indians. Their Notions about the Stars, Eclipses and Thunder. Their Manner of calculating Time.*

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KASKASQUIAS, October 20, 1721.

MADAM,

I MUST ingenuously confess to you, that at my departure from Pimiteouy, I was not quite so undaunted as I pretended to be, as well for my own honour as not entirely to dishearten those who accompanied me, some of whom had much ado to dissemble their fear. The alarm in which I found the Illinois, their mournful songs, the sight <sup>[ 216 ]</sup> of the dead bodies exposed upon the frames, terrible objects, which every moment represented to my imagination what I must expect, should I have the misfortune to fall into the hands of these barbarians: all this made such an impression upon me, that I had not the  
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command of myself, and for seven or eight days I was not able to sleep with tranquillity.

I was not, indeed, apprehensive of an open attack from the enemy, because I had fourteen men with me, well armed and under a good commander; but every thing was to be dreaded from surprizes, there being no labour which the Indians will not undergo, in order to draw their enemies into the snares which they lay for them. One of the most common is to counterfeit the cry of some wild beast, or the voice of some bird, in the imitation of which they are so dexterous, that people are every day deceived by them. For instance, being encamped at the entrance of a wood, they imagine that they hear the cry of a buffalo, deer, or wild duck; two or three run thither in hopes of finding game, and frequently never return.

The distance between Pimiteouy and the Mississippi, is reckoned to be seventy leagues: I have already said, that from the rock to Pimiteouy, there is fifteen; the former of these two villages is in forty-one degrees, north lat. and the mouth of the river of the Illinois in forty;<sup>1</sup> so that from the rock, the course of this river is westward inclining a little to the south, but with several windings or circuits. There are islands scattered up and down in it, some of which are pretty large; its banks are but low in several places. During the <sup>1217</sup> spring the meadows on the right and left are for the most part under water, and afterwards are covered with very tall grass. It is pretended this river abounds every where with fish, but we had not time to catch any, nor had we any such nets as the depth of its waters would require. We would much rather have killed a buffalo or roebuck, and of these we had our choice.

<sup>1</sup>The latitude of the village at the Rock is somewhat more than forty-one degrees, while the mouth of Illinois River is about thirty-nine north latitude.



On the sixth, we perceived a number of buffaloes swimming across the river, with a great deal of precipitation, which we doubted not had been pursued by some of the enemy's parties, of whom we have already spoken; this obliged us to continue our voyage all night in order to get at as great distance as possible from such dangerous neighbours. On the morrow before day-break we passed by the *Saguimont*, a large river which comes from the south,<sup>2</sup> and five or six leagues below that we left on the same side a smaller one, called the river of the *Macopines*; these are a large kind of root, which eaten raw is a rank poison, but which when roasted five or six hours or more before a slow fire, loses all its pernicious quality.<sup>3</sup> Between these two rivers, and at an equal distance from either, is a marsh called *Machoutin*,<sup>4</sup> precisely half way between Pimiteouy and the Mississippi.

Soon after passing the river of the Macopines, we perceived the banks of the Mississippi, which are extremely high. Notwithstanding which we were above four and twenty hours, and that frequently under full sail, before we entered it; for at this place the river of the Illinois changes its course from west to south and by east. One might say, that out of regret to its being obliged to pay [218] the tribute of its waters to another river, it endeavours to return back to its source.

At its entrance into the Mississippi, its channel runs east-south-east. On the ninth of this month a little after

<sup>2</sup>Now the Sangamon River, originally called Sangamo. The word is said to mean, in Potawatomi, the country where there is plenty to eat. Ill. Hist. Soc. *Transactions*, 1907, 87.

<sup>3</sup>Apparently this is what was known as the white potato, called also wapato (*Sagittaria latifolia*).

<sup>4</sup>This name, which means bad lands, was translated by the French into Mauvaise Terre, the present name of the creek.

two in the afternoon, we found ourselves in this river, which makes at present so great a noise in France,<sup>5</sup> leaving on our right a large meadow, whence issues a small river, in which there is a great quantity of copper. Nothing can be more delightful than this whole coast. But it is quite another thing on the left, there being on that side very high mountains, interspersed with rocks, amongst which grow a few cedars; but this is only a narrow chain, and conceals behind it very fine meadows.

On the tenth about nine in the morning, after sailing five leagues on the Mississippi, we arrived at the mouth of the Missouri, which lies north-west and south-south-east.<sup>6</sup> Here is the finest confluence of two rivers that, I believe, is to be met with in the whole world, each of them being about half a league in breadth; but the Missouri is by far the most rapid of the two, and seems to enter the Mississippi like a conqueror, carrying its white waters unmixed across its channel quite to the opposite side; this colour it afterwards communicates to the Mississippi, which henceforth it never loses, but hurls with precipitation to the sea itself.

We lay this night in a village of the *Caoquias* and the *Tamarouas*, two Illinois tribes which have been united, and together compose no very numerous canton.<sup>7</sup> This village is situated on a small river which runs from the

<sup>5</sup>The speculative Company of the West, formed in 1718 for the trade monopoly of Louisiana, was usually spoken of as the Mississippi Company. Its shares sold for fabulous prices until its collapse in 1720, when it was spoken of as the "Mississippi bubble." The entire era was one of great excitement in France.

<sup>6</sup>Marquette in his journal calls the Missouri River the Pekitanoui, another Indian term for muddy.

<sup>7</sup>Near the present Cahokia, Illinois. The Tamaroa, one division of the Illinois tribe, were first encountered by La Salle in the valley of Illinois River. A very large number of this tribe was destroyed by the Iroquois invasion of 1680. The remnant united with the Cahokia, and removed to a site on Cahokia Creek, where they remained until 1790 when they crossed to trans-Mississippi territory.

east,

east, and has no water but in <sup>[219]</sup> the spring season so that we were obliged to walk above half a league, before we could get to our cabbins. I was astonished they had pitched upon so inconvenient a situation, especially as they had so many better in their choice; but I was told that the Mississippi washed the foot of that village when it was built, that in three years it has lost half a league of its breadth, and that they were thinking of seeking out for another habitation, which is no great affair amongst the Indians.

I passed the night in the missionaries' house, who are two Ecclesiasticks from the seminary of Quebeck, formerly my disciples, but they must now be my masters. M. Taumur the eldest of the two was absent;<sup>8</sup> I found the youngest M. le Mercier such as he had been represented to me, rigid to himself, full of charity to others, and displaying in his own person, an amiable pattern of virtue. But he enjoyed so ill a state of health, that I am afraid he will not be able long to support that kind of life, which a missionary is obliged to lead in this country.<sup>9</sup>

On the eleventh after sailing five leagues farther, I left on my right the river *Maramég*, where they are at present employed in searching for a silver mine.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps, your Grace may not be displeased if I inform you what suc-

<sup>8</sup>Thaumur de la Source was a Seminary priest who came in 1718 to the Cahokia mission where he remained ten years. After his return to Quebec he lived but three years longer. The Cahokia mission was founded in 1699 by Jean François Buisson de St. Cosme. The right of the Seminary priests to maintain a mission among the Illinois was contested by the Jesuits; the case was decided in favor of the Seminary missionaries, who kept up the Cahokia mission until the end of the French régime.

<sup>9</sup>Charlevoix's prophecy was not fulfilled, for Father Mercier, who came in 1718 to the Cahokia mission, served there for thirty-five years, dying among his neophytes March 30, 1753.

<sup>10</sup>Still known by the same name, which means catfish; it is now spelled Meramec. The mine was near the present Potosi. It was first mentioned in 1700 by Father Gravier. *Jesuit Relations*, lxxv, 105.

cess may be expected from this undertaking. Here follows what I have been able to learn about this affair from a person who is well acquainted with it, and who has resided for several years on the spot. In the year 1719, the *Sieur de Lochon* being sent by the West-India company<sup>11</sup> in quality of founder, having dug in a place which had been marked out to him, drew up a pretty large quantity of ore, a pound whereof, [<sup>220</sup>] which took up four days in melting, produced as they say two drams of silver; but some have suspected him of putting in this quantity himself. A few months afterwards he returned thither, and without thinking any more of the silver, he extracted from two or three thousand weight of ore, fourteen pounds of very bad lead, which stood him in fourteen hundred francs. Disgusted with a labour which was so unprofitable, he returned to France.<sup>12</sup>

The company, persuaded of the truth of the indications which had been given them, and that the incapacity of the founder had been the sole cause of their bad success, sent in his room a Spaniard called Antonio, who had been taken at the siege of Pensacola, had afterwards been a galley-slave, and boasted much of his having wrought in a mine at Mexico. They gave him very considerable appointments, but he succeeded no better than had done the *Sieur de Lochon*. He was not discouraged himself, and others inclined to believe he had failed from his not being versed in the construction of furnaces. He gave over the

<sup>11</sup>This was the company founded by Law; its official title was "*La Compagnie de l'Ouest*."

<sup>12</sup>The mineral wealth of the upper Mississippi had been noted since the time of Nicolas Perrot, who about 1690 discovered lead mines near Dubuque. By 1700 the Missouri mines were known. Both Crozat's Company of the Indies (1712) and John Law's Company of the West (1718) expected to find rich mines to exploit like those of the Spanish in Mexico. The small amount of silver that was extracted from the lead mines proved a bitter disappointment to the promoters of these companies.



search after lead, and undertook to make silver; he dug down to the rock which was found to be eight or ten feet in thickness; several pieces of it were blown up and put into a crucible, from whence it was given out, that he extracted three or four drams of silver; but many are still doubtful of the truth of this fact.

About this time arrived a company of the king's miners, under the direction of one *La Renaudiere*, who resolving to begin with the lead mine, was able to do nothing; because neither he himself nor any of his company were in the least acquainted <sup>[ 221 ]</sup> with the construction of furnaces.<sup>13</sup> Nothing could be more surprizing than the facility with which the company at that time exposed themselves to great expences, and the little precaution they took to be satisfied of the capacity of those they employed. *La Renaudiere* and his miners not being able to produce any lead, a private company undertook the mines of *Marameg*, and the *Sieur Renaud* one of the directors, superintended them with care. In the month of June last he found a bed of lead two foot in thickness, running to a great length over a chain of mountains, where he has now set his people to work. He flatters himself that there is silver below the lead. Every body is not of his opinion, but time will discover the truth.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup>Little is known of *La Renaudière*, who had the title of mining engineer. He accompanied *Bourgmont* on his exploring expedition of 1724 to the far West, and probably returned after that to France. His mining attempts were on the *Negro Fork* of the *Meramec* in *Washington County, Missouri*.

<sup>14</sup>*Philippe François Renault* was the son of a rich iron manufacturer of *Picardy* who was a stockholder in the *Company of the West*. The younger *Renault* was created director-general of mines and in 1719 arrived in the *New World* with a large force of miners. He also brought from *San Domingo* slaves to work the mines — the first negroes in the *Illinois* country. *Renault* had large grants on both the east and west side of the *Mississippi*. In *Illinois* he founded the settlement of *St. Philippe*, and in *Missouri* he worked the mine called *La Motte*. He took out large quantities of lead, and extracted a little silver from the ores. He sold out his holdings in 1744 and returned to France.

Yesterday



Yesterday I arrived at Kaskasquias about nine o'clock in the morning.<sup>15</sup> The Jesuits have here a very flourishing mission,<sup>16</sup> which has lately been divided into two, thinking it convenient to have two cantons of Indians instead of one. The most numerous is on the banks of the Mississippi, of which two Jesuits have the spiritual direction:<sup>17</sup> half a league below stands fort Chartres, about the distance of a musket-shot from the river.<sup>18</sup> M. Dugué de Boisbrilland, a gentleman of Canada, commands here for the company, to whom this place belongs;<sup>19</sup> the French are now beginning to settle the country between this fort and the first mission.<sup>20</sup> Four leagues farther and about a league from the river, is a large village inhabited by the French, who are almost all Canadians and have a Jesuit for their cu-

<sup>15</sup>The Kaskaskia branch of the Illinois Indians removed in 1700 from the Illinois River valley to the Kaskaskia River. Near them in this latter place a French settlement grew up, that ultimately became the largest and most important village of the entire region. In 1747 it became the capital of French Illinois, and in 1766 was surrendered to the British. George Rogers Clark captured Kaskaskia for the American cause in 1778. It remained the governmental center of Illinois until the formation in 1818 of the state. Old Kaskaskia has been almost swept away by the erosion of the river.

<sup>16</sup>The Jesuit mission to the Illinois tribesmen was begun by Father Marquette in 1674; after his death in 1675 Father Allouez continued the work. Father Gravier, who came in 1693, was the second founder. He accompanied the Kaskaskia Indians from the Illinois River to the Kaskaskia, and the mission was continued until after the close of the French régime.

<sup>17</sup>These Jesuits had a mission at the Michigamea village on the Mississippi just above Fort de Chartres. The two incumbents at the time of Charlevoix's visit were probably Jean Marie de Ville, who came to Illinois in 1707 and left after 1720; and Jean Charles Guymonneau, in service from 1716 to 1736.

<sup>18</sup>Fort de Chartres was built in 1720 and named for the Duc de Chartres, son of the regent Duc d'Orléans. In 1747 it was abandoned for Kaskaskia; but six years later Fort de Chartres was rebuilt in stone, one of the finest works of its kind in America. After the surrender to the British in 1766, Fort de Chartres was garrisoned by them for six years, after which it was finally abandoned because of the encroachments of the river.

<sup>19</sup>Pierre Duqué Sieur de Boisbriant was born in Canada in 1675 and came to Louisiana with his cousins Iberville and Bienville. In 1718 he was made governor of the Illinois country; upon the recall of Bienville he was summoned to New Orleans as governor general, from which position he retired in 1727. He is thought to have been an honest administrator, and was much beloved by the natives.

<sup>20</sup>This refers to the settlement of Prairie du Rocher, begun not long before Charlevoix's visit.

rate.

rate.<sup>21</sup> The second village of the Illinois lies farther up the country, at the distance of two leagues from this last, and is under the charge of a fourth Jesuit.<sup>22</sup>

[<sup>222</sup>] The French in this place live pretty much at their ease; a Fleming, who was a domestic of the Jesuits, has taught them to sow wheat which succeeds very well. They have black cattle and poultry.<sup>23</sup> The Illinois on their part manure the ground after their fashion, and are very laborious. They likewise bring up poultry, which they sell to the French.<sup>24</sup> Their women are very neat-handed and industrious. They spin the wool of the buffaloe, which they make as fine as that of the English sheep; nay sometimes it might even be mistaken for silk. Of this they manufacture stuffs which are dyed black, yellow, or a deep red. Of these stuffs they make robes which they sew with thread made of the sinews of the roe-buck. The manner of making this thread is very simple. After stripping the flesh from the sinews of the roe-buck, they expose them to the sun for the space of two days; after they are dry they beat them, and then without difficulty draw out a thread as white and as fine as that of Mechlin, but much stronger.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>21</sup> The French village of Kaskaskia was about five miles up the Kaskaskia River on the south bank; in a direct line from the Mississippi it was not more than a league. The Jesuit curé at this time was Father Jean Antoine le Boullenger, who dwelt there from 1703 to 1741.

<sup>22</sup> The village of the Kaskaskia Indians was at this time on the north bank above French Kaskaskia. Its missionary was Father Nicolas Ignace Beaubois.

<sup>23</sup> It is not known when cattle were introduced into the Illinois settlement, but there is no doubt that after 1712 the colonists had cows, raised grain and ground it, and lived in ease and plenty. Illinois ultimately became the source of provision supply for New Orleans and lower Louisiana posts. Iberville in 1699 imported cattle from Canada to Biloxi; probably the Illinois supply came from the lower river.

<sup>24</sup> The Indians had no domesticated fowls; the Kaskaskia must have learned to raise poultry from the whites.

<sup>25</sup> This native industry of spinning and weaving buffalo hair was doubtless increased under tuition from the whites. Several plans for developing the Mississippi Valley included the utilization of buffalo wool.

The

The French canton is bounded on the north by a river, the banks of which are extremely high, so that though the waters sometimes rise five and twenty feet, they seldom overflow their channel. All this country is open consisting of vast meadows to the extent of five and twenty leagues, which are interspersed with small copses of very valuable wood. White mulberries especially are very common here; but I am surprized that the inhabitants should be suffered to cut them down for the building of their houses, especially, as there is a sufficient quantity of other trees equally proper for that purpose.<sup>26</sup>

[<sup>223</sup>] The most remarkable of the fruit-trees, peculiar to this country, are the Pacane, the Acimine, and the Piakimine trees.<sup>27</sup> The Pacane is a nut of the size and shape of a large acorn. The shell of some of them is very thin, while others have it harder and thicker, but the fruit is so much the less on that account. All have a very fine and delicate taste; the tree rises to a great height; in its wood, bark, smell and shape of its leaves, it seems to me greatly to resemble the filbert trees of Europe.

The Acimine is a fruit of the length of a man's finger, and an inch in diameter. Its pulp is tender and sweetish, and full of a seed much resembling that of the water melon. The tree grows to no great height or thickness; all those I have seen being nothing but shrubs, the wood of which is very tender. Its bark is thin, its leaves long and large like those of the chestnut, but of a deeper green.

The Piakimine is in shape like a damask plum, though somewhat larger: its skin is tender, its substance watery, and colour red; and has besides a very delicate flavour.

<sup>26</sup>Charlevoix means that the opportunity for silk culture was lost by destroying the mulberry trees. Silk-worms were introduced without much success into several parts of Louisiana; by 1726 silk was listed among the exports.

<sup>27</sup>Probably these were the pecan, the chinquapin, and the persimmon.

It contains seeds which differ only from those of the Acimine in being somewhat smaller. The Indians make a paste of this fruit, which they bake into loaves of the thickness of a man's finger, and of the consistence of a dried pear. The taste seems at first somewhat disagreeable, but people are easily accustomed to it. It is very nourishing, and a sovereign remedy, as they pretend, against a looseness and bloody-flux. The tree which bears this fruit, is a very fine one, and about the size of our ordinary plum-trees. Its leaves have five points, its wood <sup>[224]</sup> is of a middling hardness, and its bark very rough.

The *Osages*, a pretty numerous nation settled on the banks of the river, bearing their own name, which runs into the Missouri about forty leagues from its confluence with the Mississippi, depute some of their people once or twice every year to sing the calumet among the Kaskasquias, and they are now actually here at present.<sup>28</sup> I have just seen a Missourian woman who tells me, her nation is the first we meet with in going up the Missouri; from whence we have given it this name, on account of our not knowing its proper appellation. Their settlement is eighty leagues from the confluence of that river with the Mississippi.

A little higher we find the *Cansez*, then the *Octotatas*, called by some the *Mactotatas*;<sup>29</sup> afterwards the *Aiouez*,<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> The Osage were a Siouan people of much force and fecundity. From their residence on the Grand and Little Osage rivers of Missouri they removed in 1825 after ceding all their Missouri lands to what is now Oklahoma.

<sup>29</sup> The Kansa were closely allied to the Osage, and dwelt when first known near the mouth of Kansas River. Gradually they moved westward until in 1815, when they made the first treaty with the United States, they were at the mouth of Saline River of Kansas, fifteen hundred in number. In 1825 they ceded most of their lands and thereafter lived on reservations in Kansas until they removed in 1873 to Indian Territory. The Octotatas or Oto belonged to the Siouan branch that included the Iowa and Missouri. In historic times they dwelt on the Missouri above the Kansas River, then on Platte River until 1880, when a portion went west to Indian Territory, while another portion remained in Nebraska.

<sup>30</sup> For the Iowa (Aiouez) Indians see *ante*, letter XIII, vol. I, 304, note 16.

and



and lastly the *Panis*, a very numerous nation, and divided into several cantons, which have names very different from one another.<sup>31</sup> This woman has confirmed to me, what I had before learned from the Sioux, that the Missouri rises from very high and bare mountains, behind which there is another large river, which probably rises from thence also and runs to the westward. This testimony is of some weight, because no Indians we know of are accustomed to travel so much as the Missouris.

All these nations of whom I have been speaking, dwell upon the western bank of the Missouri, excepting the Aïouez who live on the eastern, and are neighbours to the Sioux and their allies. The most considerable rivers which fall into the Mis-<sup>[225]</sup> sissippi above the river of the Illinois, are in the first place, the river of *Buffaloes*, which is at the distance of twenty leagues from the former, and comes from the westward; a fine salt-pit has been discovered in its neighbourhood.<sup>32</sup> Pits of the same kind have been found on the banks of the Marameg, twenty leagues from hence. About forty leagues farther is the *Assenesipi*, or river at the rock; because its mouth is directly opposite to a mountain placed in the river itself, where travellers affirm rock-chrysal is to be found.<sup>33</sup>

Twenty-five leagues higher up, we find on the right hand the *Ouisconsing*, by which Father Marquette and the Sieur Joliet entered the Mississippi, when they first discovered it. The Aïouez who are settled in this place, lying

<sup>31</sup>The Pawnee (*Panis*) are of Caddoan stock, and ranged the great plains east of the Rocky Mountains. Several of their villages were on the Platte and its tributaries.

<sup>32</sup>Salt River in Pike County, Missouri.

<sup>33</sup>Rock River of Wisconsin and Illinois; the "mountain" is the high Rock Island in the Mississippi.



in 43 deg. 30 min. north latitude,<sup>34</sup> who are great travelers, and as is said march five and twenty or thirty leagues a day, when without their families, tell us that after leaving their country we should in three days arrive amongst a people called *Omans*, who have white skins and fair hair, especially the women. They add, that this people is continually at war with the Panis and other more remote Indians towards the west, and that they have heard them speak of a great lake very far from their country, on the banks of which are people resembling the French, with buttons on their cloaths, living in cities, and using horses in hunting the Buffalo, and cloathed with the skins of that animal; but without any arms except the bow and arrow.<sup>35</sup>

On the left side about fifty leagues above the river of Buffaloes, the river *Moingona*<sup>36</sup> issues from the midst of an immense meadow, which swarms <sup>[226]</sup> with Buffaloes and other wild beasts: at its entrance into the Mississippi, it is very shallow as well as narrow; nevertheless, its course from north to west, is said to be two hundred and fifty leagues in length. It rises from a lake and is said to form a second, at the distance of fifty leagues from the first.

Turning to the left from this second lake we enter into Blue River, so called from its bottom, which is an earth of that colour. It discharges itself into the river of St. *Peter*.<sup>37</sup> Going up the Moingona, we find great plenty of pit coal, and a hundred and fifty leagues from its mouth there is a

<sup>34</sup>Marquette called this river the Miscousin, whence it was corrupted into Ouisconsin. The mouth of this stream is about 43° latitude.

<sup>35</sup>Charlevoix appears to have been deceived by these vague Indian tales. There is no such tribe as the "Omans"; possibly it may relate to the Mandan, who were sometimes spoken of as the "white Indians." The tale may have reference to the Spaniards, who certainly, however, possessed firearms.

<sup>36</sup>The Des Moines River.

<sup>37</sup>The Blue Earth River, which heads near the sources of the Des Moines. Minnesota River was called the St. Pierre and the St. Peters until the nineteenth century.

very large cape, which causes a turn in the river, in which place its waters are red and stinking. It is affirmed, that great quantities of mineral stones and some antimony have been found upon this cape.<sup>38</sup>

A league above the mouth of the Moingona, there are two *rapides* or strong currents of a considerable length in the Mississippi, where passengers are obliged to unload and carry their pirogues: and above the second *rapide*, that is about twenty leagues from the Moingona, there are lead mines on both sides of the river, which were discovered some time ago, by a famous traveller of Canada called Nicholas Perrot, whose name they still bear.<sup>39</sup> Ten leagues above the Ouisconsing, and on the same side is a meadow sixty leagues in length, and bounded by mountains which afford a delightful prospect; there is another on the west side, but it is not of such a length.<sup>40</sup> Twenty leagues higher than the extremity of the first meadow, the river grows wider, and is here called <sup>[227]</sup> *le lac de bon Secours*. This is a league over and seven leagues in circuit. Nicholas Perrot built a fort on the right side.<sup>41</sup>

On leaving this lake you meet with *l'isle Pelée*, or Bald Island, so named from its having no trees upon it; this is a very fine meadow: and the French of Canada have frequently made it the center of their commerce for the western parts, and many have even wintered there, all

<sup>38</sup> Since this account was given from Indian reports it is not practical to identify the site. Pit coal is found in many places on the Des Moines River, but no antimony is known. The most remarkable bend is in Van Buren County, near Keosauqua; but this is not high enough up to answer to Charlevoix's description.

<sup>39</sup> The Dubuque mines were first discovered about 1690 by Perrot. See *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, xvi, 151.

<sup>40</sup> Probably these are La Crosse Prairie and the prairie on which Winona is built.

<sup>41</sup> Lake Pepin, named in all probability for one of Duluth's companions, is a wide-spread of the Mississippi. Perrot built Fort St. Antoine on its southeastern bank near Stockholm in Pepin County, Wisconsin. *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, x, 369-371. At this post Perrot in 1689 took possession of the Sioux country for France.

this

this country being very plentiful of game.<sup>42</sup> Three leagues above Bald Island you leave on your right hand the *rivière de Sainte Croix*, or river of the Holy Cross,<sup>43</sup> which proceeds from the neighbourhood of Lake Superior; copper is said to have been found near its mouth. Some leagues farther you leave on the left the river of St. Peter, the banks of which are inhabited by the Sioux, and its mouth is at no great distance from St. Anthony's fall. Beyond this great cascade the Mississippi is altogether unknown.<sup>44</sup>

To return to the Illinois; if what I have heard asserted in several places be true, and which the Missouri woman above-mentioned has also confirmed to me, that they and the Miamis come from the banks of a very distant sea, to the westward,<sup>45</sup> it would seem that their first station after they made their descent into this country was the Moin-gona: at least it is certain, that one of their tribes bears that name. The rest are known under the <sup>[228]</sup> names of *Peorias*, *Tamarouas*, *Caoquias*, and *Kaskasquias*; these tribes are at present very much confounded, and are become very inconsiderable. There remains only a very small number of the Kaskasquias, and the two villages of that name are almost entirely composed of the Tamarouas and *Metchigamias*, a foreign nation adopted by the

<sup>42</sup>Now Prairie Island, nine miles below Hastings, Minnesota. At this site Pierre le Sueur in 1695 built a fort.

<sup>43</sup>Still St. Croix River, the boundary between Wisconsin and Minnesota. From its headwaters is a portage by Brule River to Lake Superior.

<sup>44</sup>The Falls of St. Anthony were named in 1680 by Father Louis Hennepin, when he was taken prisoner by the Sioux and carried to Lake Mille Lac. The route to this latter site via Rum River was early known. Le Sueur is also believed to have explored the upper Mississippi as far as Sandy Lake. See W. W. Folwell, *History of Minnesota* (St. Paul, 1921), 39, *note*.

<sup>45</sup>A Miamise woman who had been prisoner among the Sioux assured Father de St. Pé, at present superior of the missions of New-France, that she had been carried by the Sioux to a village of their nation, which was very near the sea. — CHARLEVOIX.

Kaskasquias,

Kaskasquias, and originally settled on the banks of a small river you meet with going down the Mississippi.<sup>46</sup>

This is, Madam, all I can at present inform you of with respect to Louisiana, which country I have but just entered; but before I conclude this letter, I must impart to you a few circumstances which I have learned on my journey from the river St. Joseph to this place, and which will serve as a supplement to what I have already said of the Indians in general.

You might have seen in the fable of Atahentsic expelled from heaven,<sup>47</sup> some traces of the first woman driven out of the terrestrial paradise, as a punishment of her disobedience; and of the deluge, as also of the ark in which Noah saved himself with his family. This circumstance prevents me from agreeing to the opinion of P. de Acosta, who alledges that this tradition does not respect the universal deluge, but another peculiar to America.<sup>48</sup> In effect, the Algonquins and all the nations who speak their language, supposing the creation of the first man, say that his posterity having almost entirely perished by a general inundation, a person named *Messou*, whom others call *Saketchak*, who saw the <sup>[229]</sup> whole world overwhelmed by the waters from the overflowing of a lake, sent a raven to the bottom of the abyss in order to bring him some earth; that this raven having failed to execute his commission, he sent a musk-rat which had better success; with the small quantity of earth which this animal brought him, he restored the world to its former state and

<sup>46</sup> Jolliet and Marquette found the Michigamea Indians on St. Francis River, in the neighborhood of the present Big Lake, possibly the lake from which they derived their name. In 1698 this tribe was on the Mississippi, in Illinois, below the Cahokia. Kellogg, *Early Narratives*, 252, 356.

<sup>47</sup> For this myth see letter XXIV, *ante*, 132-133.

<sup>48</sup> For Acosta and his theory of the deluge see *Preliminary Discourse*, vol. I, 12.

condition;



condition; that he shot arrows into the trunks of trees which still appear, and that those arrows were changed into branches: that he performed several other wonders; and that out of gratitude for the service the musk-rat had done him, he married a female of his species, by whom he had children who repeopled the earth: that he had communicated his immortality to a certain savage, which he gave him in a little packet, forbidding him, at the same time to open it, under the penalty of losing so precious a gift.<sup>49</sup>

The Hurons and the Iroquois say, that *Taronhiaougon*, the king of heaven, gave his wife so rude a blow with his foot, that it made her tumble down from heaven to earth; that this woman fell upon the back of a tortoise, who by removing the waters of the deluge with his feet, at last discovered the earth, and carried the woman to the foot of a tree, where she brought forth twins, and that the elder whom they call *Tahouiskaron*, killed his younger brother.<sup>50</sup>

It is not at all surprising, that these people so indifferent about the past, and to whom the consideration of the future gives so little uneasiness, should know almost nothing of the heavens, and <sup>[230]</sup> make no difference between the planets and fixed stars, unless it be their dividing these last as we do, into constellations. The Pleiades, they call the *Dancers*, and give the name of the *Bear* to the four first stars of that constellation, which we call the Great Bear; the three others which compose its tail are, according to them, three hunters who pursue the bear; and the little star which accompanies that in the middle, is, with them a kettle with which the second is loaded. The

<sup>49</sup> Charlevoix has taken this myth from *Jesuit Relations*, vi, 157-159. See also William E. Connolly, "Religious Conceptions of the Modern Hurons" in *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, ix, 110-125.

<sup>50</sup> This account is derived from Joseph Lafitau, *Mœurs des Sauvages Américains* (Paris, 1724), I, 244, 401.



Indians of Acadia call this and the next constellation simply the Great and Little Bear; but is there not reason to suspect, that when they spoke in this manner to the *Sieur Lescarbot*, they only repeated what they had before heard from the French themselves.

The Indians, for the most part, call the polar star, the star which has no motion. It is this which directs their course by night, as the sun serves them for a compass by day. They have likewise other marks by which to distinguish the north. They pretend to have observed that the tops of trees incline a little to that side, as also that the interior pellicles of their bark are thicker on that side. They do not, however, trust so entirely to this, as to neglect other precautions to prevent their wandering, and to help them to find their way back to a place from whence they had set out.

As to what regards the course of the stars, the causes of the celestial phenomena, the nature of meteors, and other such like things; they are with respect to all these, as with respect to every thing which does not affect the senses, profoundly ignorant <sup>[231]</sup> and perfectly indifferent. When an eclipse happens, they imagine there is a great battle in heaven, and shoot arrows in the air, in order to drive away the pretended enemies of the sun and moon. The Hurons in an eclipse of the moon, were persuaded she was indisposed, and in order to recover her out of her dis-temper, used to make a great noise, accompanied with abundance of ceremonies and with prayers. Particularly, they never failed to throw stones at the dogs and beat them cruelly with sticks to make them cry, imagining the moon to be fond of these animals.<sup>51</sup>

These Indians, as well as many others, could never be brought to believe, that an eclipse was an indifferent

<sup>51</sup> This account of the Huron idea of an eclipse is from *Jesuit Relations*, vi, 223.

thing and purely natural: they drew good or bad auguries from it according to the place of the sky in which that star happened to be obscured. Nothing astonished them more than to see with what exactness the missionaries foretold these phenomena, and they concluded from thence, that they ought likewise to foresee their consequences.<sup>52</sup>

These people are equally ignorant of the nature of thunder; some taking it to be the voice of a particular species of men, who fly in the air, while others imagine this noise proceeds from certain unknown birds.<sup>53</sup> According to the Montagnais, it is the effort of a certain genius, in order to vomit up a serpent he had swallowed, and they support this opinion by alledging that when thunder falls on a tree they discover a figure on it, something resembling that animal.<sup>54</sup>

[232] All of them reckon by lunar months; for the most part the year has but twelve; some, however, give it always thirteen. There are no great inconveniencies attending this diversity amongst people who have no annals, and whose affairs do not depend on annual epochas. There is likewise a great variety in the names of the seasons and months amongst them; because in all these countries the seasons for hunting and fishing, seed-time and harvest, the birth and fall of the leaf, the passages of particular beasts and birds, the time when the roe-bucks change their hair, and when different animals are in rut, serve to

<sup>52</sup> Father Allouez utilized the prophecy of an eclipse to combat the native superstitions. See *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, xvi, 68, 113.

<sup>53</sup> The myth of the thunderbird is wide-spread. The Hurons held it (*Jesuit Relations*, vi, 225); the Winnebago made effigy mounds in its honor. On the grounds of the State Hospital opposite Madison, Wisconsin, is a thunderbird effigy with a wingspread of six hundred and twenty feet.

<sup>54</sup> For this myth see *Jesuit Relations*, x, 195-197.

distinguished

distinguish all these things which, besides, vary considerably in the different cantons.<sup>55</sup>

In some nations, the years are reckoned by the signs, except when a person intends to specify his age, and on some occasions, when they make use of lunar months. There is no where any distinction of weeks, and the days have no name in any of their languages. They have four fixed points in the day, to wit, sun-rising and sun-setting, mid-day and mid-night, with respect to which or any other time of the day, they are never deceived. But the astronomical exactness to make the lunar years agree with the solar, of which the Baron de la Hontan does them the honour, is a mere imagination of that writer.<sup>56</sup>

They have no chronological supputation, and if they preserve the epochas of certain remarkable events, they do not reckon the time elapsed since to a scrupulous exactness; but content themselves with retaining the facts themselves, and have in-<sup>[233]</sup>vented several means whereby to perpetuate the memory of them. For instance, the Hurons and Iroquois have porcelain in their publick treasures on which are painted figures, which recall the remembrance of memorable incidents.<sup>57</sup> Others make use of knots tied after a certain fashion, and if the imagination is set at work to sound out their meaning, they are not therefore deceived.<sup>58</sup> Lastly, all of them reckon by units till the number ten, and then by decads or tens to a hundred, and so by hundreds to tens of hundreds or thousands, farther than which they never carry any calculations.

<sup>55</sup> In 1921 a Winnebago prepared a calendar giving the tribal names of the calendar months. It was copyrighted and published by its author, Oliver Le Mere.

<sup>56</sup> See Thwaites, *Lahontan's New Voyages* (Chicago, 1905), II, 427-429.

<sup>57</sup> Wampum belts, for which see *ante*, letter XIII, vol. I, 302, note 13.

<sup>58</sup> See method of counting by blocks of wood, reported in *Jesuit Relations*, lxiv, 177-179.

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## LETTER TWENTY-NINTH.

*Of the Colony of the Illinois. Voyage to Akansas. Description of the Country.*

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KASKASQUIAS, November 8, 1721.

M A D A M ,

**M**Y last letter is now gone for Canada, whence I am assured it will soon be forwarded for France, by the way of Cape Breton. Besides, should it miscarry by the way, the loss would not be very great: I begin this letter likewise at Kaskasquias, but, in all probability, shall not finish it here, having been above a month in this place, and now hastening my departure as fast as possible.

As I have seen nothing of Louisiana as yet, except this post, being the first of them all with respect to antiquity; I cannot form any judgement of it, by comparing it with the rest. What seems certain to me is, that this has a double advantage, one of which can never be disputed, and the other, at least at present renders it necessary to the whole <sup>[236]</sup> province. The first is its situation, which is very near Canada, with which it will at all times preserve a communication, equally useful to both colonies.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The communication between Canada and Illinois was destroyed in 1706 by the revolt of the Peoria Indians, who seriously wounded the missionary Gravier. All traders were prohibited from passing that way for some time. Alvord, *Illinois*, 136-137.

The

The second is, that it is capable of becoming the granary of Louisiana, which it is able to furnish with corn in abundance, even should it be peopled quite to the sea.

The soil is not only extremely proper for wheat, but, besides, refuses nothing necessary or useful for human life. The climate is extremely temperate, lying in thirty-eight degrees, thirty-nine minutes north latitude; cattle and sheep would multiply here wonderfully, even the wild Buffaloes might be tamed, and great advantages drawn from a trade of their wool and hides, and from their supplying the inhabitants with food.<sup>2</sup> The air is very wholesome, and if some distempers are seen in it, they ought to be imputed to the poverty or libertinism of the inhabitants, and perhaps, in some measure, to the lands being newly cleared; but this last inconvenience cannot always last, and the change of climate will be nothing to those who may happen to be born here afterwards. In the last place, we are more assured of the friendship of the Illinois, than of any other Indian nation in Canada, the Abenakis excepted. They are almost all Christians, of a mild disposition, and extremely well affected towards the French.

Here I am, Madam, at the distance of a hundred and fifty leagues from the place where I began this letter: I shall finish it here, and give it to a traveller, who reckons to be much sooner at New-Orleans than I, as he intends to stop no where, whereas I shall be obliged to make some stay among the Natchez. Besides, I had counted upon [237] two things at my departure from the Illinois; first, that having a very rapid river to descend, where there

<sup>2</sup> In 1702-1704 an attempt to develop the buffalo industry and to tan the hides was made by a Canadian, Charles Juchereau de St. Denis. He built a post near Cairo, Illinois, opened tanning pits, and employed numbers of Indian hunters. Juchereau died in 1704, probably from malaria, and the enterprise was abandoned.



was no danger of being stopt by those falls and *rapides*, so frequent in the rivers of Canada, I should not be long on my voyage, though I had the space of four hundred leagues to traverse, by means of the circuits the river makes; next, that as my course lay always to the southward, I should have no occasion to take any precautions against the cold; but I have been deceived in both these particulars. I have been obliged to make a much slower passage than I had formerly on the lakes, and have felt a cold full as piercing as I ever knew at Quebec.

It is true, it was quite otherwise at Kaskasquias some days ago, when I left it; but I have since learned on my way hither, that the river was at first frozen over in such a manner that people crossed it in carriages, notwithstanding it is at that place half a league broad, and more rapid than the Rhone. This is the more surprising, as for the most part, excepting a few slight frosts occasioned by the north and north-west winds, the winter is in this country hardly sensible. The river has not been frozen wherever I have been, but as I was obliged to remain all the day in an open boat, and consequently, was exposed to all the injuries of the weather, and had taken no precautions against a cold I did not foresee, I have suffered very great hardships.

Could I have made more haste, I should have found a sensible diminution of this inconvenience every day; but it is necessary to use great caution in sailing on the Mississippi. People do not chuse to venture themselves in canoes of bark, by reason <sup>[238]</sup> that the river constantly carries down with the current a number of trees, or else receives them from other rivers which fall into it; and many of these trees stopping on some point of land or on some shoal, there is danger every moment of running foul  
of

of a branch or a root under water, which would be sufficient to break these frail vehicles to pieces, especially when in order to avoid an enemy or for some other reason you are obliged to travel by night, or to set out before day.

They must therefore substitute pirogues in room of canoes of bark, that is to say, trunks of trees hollowed, which are not subject to these inconveniencies, but are bad going vessels, and not so easily managed. I have one made of a walnut-tree, but so narrow that it cannot carry sail;<sup>3</sup> and my guides being accustomed to those little paddles made use of in canoes, are far from being expert at the management of the oar. Besides, if the wind rises ever so little, the water comes into the pirogue; and this often happens at this season of the year.

On the tenth of November at sunset, I embarked in the little river of Kaskasquias, and though it was not two leagues to the Mississippi, yet I was obliged to encamp at half way, and the next day I could not get further than six leagues down the river. The leaves fall sooner in this place than in France, and do not begin to bud till about the end of May, notwithstanding that it snows very seldom here, and although, as I have already observed, the winters are exceeding temperate. What then can be the reason of this backwardness of the spring: for my part I can see no other than the <sup>[239]</sup> thickness of the forests, which prevents the earth from being warmed by the sun soon enough to cause the sap to ascend.

On the 12th, after having advanced two leagues, I passed *Cape St. Anthony* on the left hand.<sup>4</sup> Here the first canes are

<sup>3</sup> The first sail-boat on the Mississippi was the felucca of Pierre le Sueur, who in 1700 voyaged to Minnesota River. *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, xvi, 179.

<sup>4</sup> Apparently this was the bluff on the east bank of the stream, known as Fountain Bluff. The present Cape Antoine is on the west bank in Perry County, Missouri. See Houck, *Missouri*, I, 241-242.

seen;

seen; these bear a great resemblance to those growing in Europe, but are taller and stronger. It is pretended they never appear but in good lands; but these lands must be very moist and wet, and consequently fitter to bear rice than wheat. When the cane lands are to be cleared, the canes are not to be plucked up by the roots; this would be a very difficult task, their knotty roots lying very deep, and being twined or linked together by a great number of fibres, which extend very far. These roots have naturally a beautiful varnish, not a little resembling those of the bamboos of Japan, of which those fine canes are made, which are sold by the Dutch under the name of *rattans*.

When a field overgrown with these canes is to be cultivated, it is sufficient to cut them close to the ground: they are afterwards left to dry, and are then set on fire, the ashes serving for manure, and the fire for opening the pores of the earth, which is afterwards tilled, and sown with rice, maize, water-melons, and in a word, with all sorts of grain and pulse, excepting wheat, which in these fat lands exhausts itself by running up into straw, and produces no grain. This defect might be easily remedied, by strewing the ground with sand, and sowing it for some years with maize or Indian corn.

[240] The high lands and other kinds of soil, not liable to be overflowed by the river, are even already very well adapted for producing corn, and if the trials made in some places have not succeeded, because the corn has been blasted or mildewed, it is owing to this circumstance, that the country not being cleared, the wind has not free access to disperse those noxious vapours which generate mildews. An evident proof of which may be drawn from this, that amongst the Illinois, where there is more meadow than wood-land, wheat thrives and ripens as well as in France.

On

On the thirteenth, after a very warm night, we advanced about three leagues, in spite of a southerly wind, which still encreased, and at last became so violent that we were obliged to halt. A heavy rain fell towards the evening, and about midnight the wind sprung up at north-west, which brought on that excessive cold I have already spoken of. To compleat our misfortune, an accident detained us all the following day, though we were not safe to remain where we then were. Not long ago the Cherokees massacred thirty Frenchmen near this place; they were commanded by a son of M. de Ramezay, governor of Montreal, and a son of the Baron de Longueuil, King's-lieutenant of that city.<sup>5</sup> Besides these Indians who are not as yet reconciled with us, we were kept in continual alarms for fear of the Outagamies, Sioux and Chicachas; and I had not above three men in my company.

On the fifteenth, the wind changed to the north, and the cold continued to encrease. We advanced four leagues to the southward, and then found that <sup>[241]</sup> the river ran four leagues more towards the north. Immediately after this uncommon winding we passed on the left the fine river *Ouabache*, by means of which there is a passage as far as the country of the Iroquois, when the waters are high.<sup>6</sup> This river, at its entrance into the Mississippi, is not less than a quarter of a league in breadth. There is not, in my opinion, a place in all Louisiana more proper

<sup>5</sup>Lieutenant de Maunoir, eldest son of Claude de Ramesay, and Ensign d'Adoucourt, one of the sons of Charles Le Moyne Baron de Longueuil, were sent west in 1715 to take part in an expedition against the Foxes. They were not successful in rallying the allied tribesmen, and retreated to Kaskaskia, where both were taken ill. The next spring orders were sent them to plunder the English who were trading on the Mississippi; they set forth, and falling in with a hostile band of Cherokee were both murdered. *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, xvi, 313, 317, 333, 337, 338, 341; *Mich. Pion. and Hist. Colls.*, xxxiii, 587.

<sup>6</sup>Now called the Ohio, but during the French régime it was considered that the Ohio emptied into the Wabash and that into the Mississippi. From the upper waters of the Allegheny River are several portages leading to the Iroquois country in western New York.



for a settlement than this, nor where it is of greater importance to us to have one. The whole country watered by the Ouabache and *Ohio*, which runs into it, is extremely fertile consisting of vast meadows, which feed thousands of buffaloes. Besides its communication with Canada is as easy as that by the river of the Illinois, and the passage much shorter. A fort with a good garrison would keep the Indians in awe, especially the Cherokees, who are the most numerous nation on this continent.<sup>7</sup>

Six leagues below the mouth of the Ouabache, and on the same side, we found the coast extremely high, and the earth of a yellow colour, from whence some have imagined that there are mines of iron in this place.<sup>8</sup> We made a good progress this day which was the sixteenth, but suffered extremely by the cold: it continued to encrease the following days, though the wind had changed to south-southwest: we were even obliged as we advanced to break the ice, which was formed on the surface of the water. On the nineteenth we got four leagues farther on our way, after which we were stopped by a south wind. I never found a north wind colder than this. It is probable, this was still the north-west wind which continued to blow, but that the land reflected it sometimes on one side, some-<sup>[242]</sup> times on another, according as our course lay upon the river.

<sup>7</sup>For the Cherokee see *ante*, letter XIII, vol. I, 299, note 9. They were divided into the Lower, Middle, and Mountain Cherokee, because of the location of their towns and some differences of dialect. The French began to penetrate to their villages in the early eighteenth century, and in 1759 the Cherokee made an attack upon the Carolinas. They were friendly to the British during the American Revolution. In 1820 the Cherokee adopted a form of government, and invented an alphabet. In 1835 they ceded their lands east of the Mississippi and removed to Oklahoma.

<sup>8</sup>This is the place known to early travelers as the Iron Banks, on the Kentucky shore about twenty miles below the Ohio. The bluffs, from eighty to one hundred and twenty feet high, are of reddish brown earth. No appreciable amount of iron has been found in them.

There



There is a species of wild cats called *Pijoux*, very numerous in these parts. These bear a great resemblance to ours, but are larger. I observed that some of them had very short tails, and others again much longer and thicker: they have likewise a very fierce look, and I have been informed they are very ravenous and good hunters.<sup>9</sup> The forests are full of walnut-trees, resembling those of Canada, and their roots have several properties not observed in the others. They are very soft, and their bark affords a black dye; but their principal use consists in medicine. They stop a looseness, and furnish an excellent emetick.

On the twentieth, there fell a great deal of snow, so that we did not stir from the place where we were, all that day; next day it grew milder, but the following night a wind at south-west cleared the sky, and the cold began afresh. Next day in the morning, the brandy left in the pirogue was found as thick as frozen oil, and the Spanish wine I used for mass was quite frozen. The further we descended the more windings we found in the river, the wind followed all its meanders, and from whatever side it came, the cold still continued excessive. In the memory of man nothing like it had been seen in this country.

This day, we perceived a post erected, on the right side of the river, on taking a near view of it, we found it was a monument set up by the Illinois, on account of an expedition they had made sometime ago against the *Chicachas*.<sup>10</sup> There were <sup>[243]</sup> two figures of men without heads, and

<sup>9</sup>The term "pichou" was applied by the Canadians to the wildcat or lynx, in imitation of its cry.

<sup>10</sup>The enmity between the Chickasaw and the Illinois was of long standing. The English traders from the Carolinas had secured a firm hold among this tribe by 1690, and thereafter until the close of the French régime the Chickasaw were the worst enemies of the French in the south. See their attack on the Illinois mentioned by St. Cosme in 1698. Kellogg, *Early Narratives*, 351, 355.

some

some others entire. The first represented the dead, and the second the captives. One of my guides informed me upon this occasion, that when any French were amongst either, they were represented with their arms upon their haunches, in order to distinguish them from the Indians, whose arms were left in a hanging posture. This distinction is not merely arbitrary, but proceeds from their having observed the French to make use of this attitude frequently, which is never done amongst them.

Garcilasso de la Vega mentions the Chicachas, in his history of the conquest of Florida, and places them nearly in the same part of the country where they are at present.<sup>11</sup> He reckons them amongst those nations of Florida who submitted to the Spaniards; but this pretended submission lasted no longer than the Spaniards were in their neighbourhood, and it is certain they sold the victory they gained over them very dear. They are still accounted the bravest soldiers in Louisiana, and were much more numerous in the time of Ferdinand de Soto, than at present: but as to the riches which this historian attributes to them, I neither understand whence they had them, nor how the source of them comes to be dried up, for at present they are neither more opulent nor better civilized than the rest of the Indians.

Our alliance with the Illinois has set us at variance with the Chicachas, and the English of Carolina blow up

<sup>11</sup> Garcia Lasso de la Vega was the son of a Spanish soldier and a sister of the last Peruvian Inca. He was born in 1537 at Cuzco, went to Spain in 1560, and there wrote a history of De Soto's expedition entitled: "*La Florida del Inca. Historia del Adelantado, Hernando de Soto* etc. (Lisbon, 1605). He described De Soto's visit to the tribe he called Chicaça. The Chickasaw then dwelt, as two hundred years later, in what is now northern Mississippi. They were a Muskogean tribe related to the Choctaw. In 1736 they inflicted a severe defeat upon the French, capturing and burning the commandant of Illinois, a Jesuit priest and many others. In 1832-1834 the Chickasaw removed from their Mississippi residence to Oklahoma.

the dissention.<sup>12</sup> Our settlement in Louisiana is a great eye-sore to them: as it is a barrier which we have placed between their power-<sup>[244]</sup> ful colonies in North-America and Mexico; and we must expect they will employ every method in their power to destroy it.<sup>13</sup> The Spaniards who see us with so much jealousy strengthening ourselves in this country, are not as yet sensible of the important services we thereby render them. A few days after we passed by this monument of the Illinois, the Chicachas had their revenge of two Frenchmen, who followed me in a pirogue. These Indians lying in ambush among the canes on the banks of the river, as soon as they saw the French opposite to them, made a rustling among the canes without shewing themselves; the two men believing it was a bear or some other wild beast drew near in order to take it; but just as they were going to land, they discharged their muskets at them, which laid them dead on the spot. I was very lucky not to be perceived by them; for my people would lose no opportunity of hunting.

On the twenty-third, after a very cold night, we had a very fine day, and though the ground was still covered with snow, the cold was supportable. On the morrow we passed by the river of the Chicachas, which is but narrow though it has a long course.<sup>14</sup> Its mouth lies north and south. From hence to Kaskasquias are reckoned eighty-six leagues; but the way by land would be shorter by one

<sup>12</sup>On the relation of the Carolina traders with these interior tribes see Verner W. Crane, "The Tennessee River as the Road to Carolina: the Beginnings of Exploration and Trade," in *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, III, 3-18; also "The Southern Frontier in Queen Anne's War," in *American Historical Review*, XXIV, 379.

<sup>13</sup>The French anticipated the English occupation of the Mississippi by a very small margin of time. In 1699 Bienville met an English vessel in the Mississippi, and compelled its departure. Hence the name "English Turn."

<sup>14</sup>Wolf River of Tennessee, at whose mouth now stands Memphis. It heads in Chickasaw territory. The French called it Rivière à Margot.

half. Nothing could have been more agreeable than this navigation had the season been milder: the country is delightful, and in the forests there are a number of ever-green trees; the few meadows there likewise preserve their verdure, and a considerable number of well wooded islands, some of which are pretty large, form very beautiful canals through which the largest ships may safely pass: it being affirmed that there is sixty fathom water in this river above a hundred and fifty leagues from the sea.

As to the forests which almost entirely cover this immense country, there is nothing, perhaps, in nature comparable to them, whether we consider the size and height of the trees, or their variety, and the advantages which may be drawn from them: for, excepting dye-woods, which require a warmer soil, and are only to be met with between the tropicks, there is hardly any sort of trees, which can be mentioned, that are not to be found here. There are forests of cypress, eight or ten leagues in extent, all the trees of which are of a thickness proportionable to their height, surpassing every thing we have of that kind in France. That sort of ever-green laurel, which we have called the tulip-tree on account of the shape of its flower, is now beginning to be known in Europe. This grows to a greater height than the chestnut-tree of India, and its leaf is much more beautiful. The palm is still larger and thicker, and yields a balm not much inferior to that of Peru. All the known species of nut-trees are likewise to be found here in great quantities, and all the woods proper for building or carpenter's work; but care must be had to avoid those which grow on the banks of the river, or in that space which is liable to be overflowed by the rising of the stream, for their roots being continually



ally soaked in water, they would be too heavy and apt to rot very soon.

At length I arrived at the first village of the *Akansas* on the second of December about ten o'clock in the morning.<sup>15</sup> This village stands in a small meadow on the western bank of the Mississippi.<sup>16</sup> There are three others within the space<sup>[246]</sup> of eight leagues, every one of which contains a nation or particular tribe, and in one of the four there are even two tribes, but all of them are comprehended under the general name of the *Akansas*. The Indians inhabiting the village where I am now revisiting, are called *Ouyapes*.<sup>17</sup> The Company of the West have here a magazine or warehouse at which goods are soon expected, and they have likewise a factor here who is very uneasy at being obliged to wait for them so long.

The river of *Akansas*, which is said to have its rise at a great distance, discharges its waters into the Mississippi at two mouths, about four leagues from each other. The first is about eight leagues from here. This river, it is said, has its rise in the country of a nation of Indians called *Black Panis*, who, I believe, are better known under the name of *Panis Ricaras*.<sup>18</sup> I have with me a slave

<sup>15</sup>The *Akansas*, *Arkansas*, or properly the *Quapaw* Indians were a large division of *Siouan* people, whose name is supposed to mean "down stream people." They were encountered in 1541 by De Soto; while in 1673 Jolliet finished his voyage of discovery at their village. La Salle, Tonti, and St. Cosme all describe their villages. They ultimately moved up the *Arkansas River*, where Nuttall found them in 1819. See his remarks on Charlevoix's account in Thwaites, *Early Western Travels* (Cleveland, 1905), xiii, 117-122.

<sup>16</sup>Nuttall says this village was at McLane's Landing, the only spot free from inundation.

<sup>17</sup>The *Quapaw* tribe called themselves *Oguah-pa*, of which this is probably a contracted form.

<sup>18</sup>Charlevoix here refers to the *Wichita*, who dwelt on the upper *Arkansas*; they were of the *Caddoan* family, and had lived with the *Skidi* or *Wolf Pawnee*, who also were mixed with the *Arikara*. It is not known that the *Arikara* or *Ree* of the upper *Missouri* ever dwelt upon the *Arkansas*. La Harpe in 1719 visited the *Wichita* village on the Canadian fork of the *Arkansas* in Pontotoc or McLean County, *Oklahoma*.



of that nation. It is very difficult to get up the river of the Arkansas, on account of the great number of *rapides*; and the water being in many places so shallow that travellers are obliged to drag their pirogues.

The river divides at the distance of seven leagues above the second and last of its mouths, and at the distance of two leagues only, above the first. A fine river, called the *White River*, which comes from the country of the Osages, falls into it.<sup>19</sup> Two leagues higher up are the *Torimas* and *Topingas*, who inhabit one village.<sup>20</sup> Two leagues farther are the Southouis.<sup>21</sup> The *Kappas* are situated a little higher up.<sup>22</sup> This nation was very numerous in the time of Ferdinand de Soto, nor had they much decreased when M. de la Sale discovered the Mississippi.<sup>23</sup> Opposite to their village may be seen the <sup>[247]</sup> melancholy ruins of Mr. Law's grant, of which the company now remain the proprietors.

It was to this place, that the nine thousand German palatinates were to have been sent; and it has been a great loss that that design proved abortive.<sup>24</sup> There is not, perhaps, a country in all Louisiana, excepting that of the Illinois, where there is a better soil, for producing all sorts of grain and feeding of cattle. Mr. Law has been very ill used, as well as the greatest part of those to whom grants were given. In all probability, it will be some time before

<sup>19</sup> The White River of Arkansas rises in Missouri near the sources of the Osage River.

<sup>20</sup> Tourima, called Toriman by Tonti, was a Quapaw village two leagues above the Tongigua or Toppinga (Tonti says Tongengan) in 1685. The latter name means little village.

<sup>21</sup> Tonti called this the Osotouy village; the native name was Uzutiuli; some of this band were living in 1891.

<sup>22</sup> This form, Kappa, is a variant of Quapaw.

<sup>23</sup> In 1905 about three hundred of this tribe were living among the Osage.

<sup>24</sup> Only about 250 German Palatines reached Law's grant on the Arkansas before the collapse in 1720 of the "Mississippi Bubble." These Germans, under their leader the Swedish officer Chevalier d'Arensborg, in 1723 received grants on what is now known as the German Coast in St. Charles and St. John parishes, Louisiana.

such

such levies are made again, there is occasion for them in the mother country; and besides, we commonly regulate our conduct upon the first success of such enterprizes, without considering what has occasioned their failure, in order to correct it for the future.

I found the village of the Ouyapes in the greatest desolation. Some time ago, a Frenchman passing this way was taken ill of the small-pox: the infection was at first communicated to a few of the Indians, and soon after to the whole canton. The burial-place appeared like a wood of stakes and posts newly erected, on which was suspended almost every thing in use amongst these barbarians.

I pitched my tent pretty near the village, and all the night I heard nothing but weeping, in which the men joined as well as the women, incessantly repeating the word *nihahani*, as I have heard it among the Illinois, and pretty much in the same tone.<sup>25</sup> The evening before, I saw a woman weeping over her son's grave, and pouring a great quantity of sagamity upon it. Another had light-<sup>[248]</sup>ed a fire beside a neighbouring tomb, probably in order to warm the deceased person. The Akansas are reckoned the largest and handsomest men of all the Indians of this continent, and are called by way of distinction *les beaux hommes*, or the handsome men.<sup>26</sup> It is believed, and perhaps for this reason, that they have the same origin with the Cansez of the Missouri, and the Poutewatomies of Canada.<sup>27</sup> But my pirogue is now loaded and I have only time to close my letter, assuring you, that *I am*, &c.

AKANSAS, December 2, 1721.

<sup>25</sup> See this chant and the music for it in *Jesuit Relations*, lix, 311.

<sup>26</sup> Nuttall thinks this designation undeserved, and that the Quapaw were not as fine appearing Indians as their relatives the Osage.

<sup>27</sup> The Kansa and the Missouri are of the same stock as the Quapaw. The Potawatomi are Algonquian. Early travelers often spoke, however, of the good looks of this latter tribe.

## LETTER THIRTIETH.

*Voyage from the Akansas to the Natchez. Description of the Country. Of the River of the Yasous. Of the Customs, Manners, and Religion of the Natchez.*

AT THE NATCHEZ, December 25, 1721.

MADAM,

SET out from the village of the Ouyapes on the third of December, somewhat late in the evening; I however pitched my tent that night a little below the first mouth of the river of the Akansas, which seems to be about five hundred paces in breadth. Next day I passed the second, which is very narrow,<sup>1</sup> and, on the fifth, pushed as far as the *Pointe Coupée*, or Cut Point.<sup>2</sup> This was a pretty high point, which run out into the river on the West side, and which the river has cut so that it is become an island; but the new channel is not, as yet, navigable, unless when the waters are high. From this place to the principal branch of the river of the Akansas, are reckoned two and twenty leagues, but there cannot be above ten in a streight line; for the river is very serpentine, dur-

<sup>1</sup> Both mouths of the Arkansas River are in Desha County, Arkansas.

<sup>2</sup> Not *Pointe Coupée* of Louisiana, but one higher up, possibly Point Chicot in the county of that name.

ing the space of seventy leagues, which must be traversed <sup>[250]</sup> in going from the village of the Ouyapes to the river of the Yasous, or Yachous, which I entered on the ninth in the afternoon. There has not fallen any snow in this place, as amongst the Illinois, but there has been a hoar frost, which has shattered the young trees, with which the low points and wet lands are covered, in such manner, that it looks as if all their branches had been purposely broken off by a stick.

The entrance into the river of the Yasous lies North-West and South-East, and is about an *Arpent* in breadth.<sup>3</sup> Its waters are of a reddish colour, and are said to affect those who drink them with the bloody flux. The air is, besides, extremely unwholesome. I had three leagues to travel before I reached the fort,<sup>4</sup> which I found all in mourning, on account of the death of Mons. Bizart, its governor. Wherever I had been in Louisiana, I had heard the highest character of this officer from all my countrymen. He was a native of Canada, and son of a Swiss major of Montreal.<sup>5</sup> At the Yasous I was told most extraordinary things of his religion, piety, and zeal, to which, at last, he fell a victim. They all regretted him as their father, and agreed that the colony had suffered an irreparable loss.

He had built the fort in a bad situation, and, before he died, had thought of removing it a league farther off, to a fine meadow, where the air was more wholesome, and where there was a village of the Yasous, mixed with the

<sup>3</sup> The Yazoo River rises in northern Mississippi, and flows south and southwest into the Mississippi River in Warren County.

<sup>4</sup> The Yazoo fort, called by the French Fort St. Pierre, was built in 1718 about ten miles above the river's mouth. It was destroyed in the Natchez rebellion of 1729.

<sup>5</sup> Little else is known of this official except what Charlevoix reports. His father, Major Bizard, was an officer in the colonial troops of Canada.

*Couroas* and *Ofogoulas*, who altogether may send about two hundred fighting men into the field.<sup>6</sup> We live in pretty good correspondence with them, but, at the same time repose no great confidence in them, on ac-<sup>[251]</sup>count of the connections which the Yasous particularly maintain with the English.

There are a great many alligators in this river, and I have seen two of them from twelve to fifteen feet in length. They are never heard but in the night-time, and their cry so much resembles the bellowing of bulls, that people are frequently deceived by it. Our people, notwithstanding, bathe in this river as freely as in the Seine. On my testifying my surprize at this, I was told, That they had nothing to fear; that indeed, when in the water, they were constantly surrounded by these animals, but that none of them came near them, and seemed only to watch them, in order to fall upon them, the moment they were going to leave the river: that then, in order to drive them away, they made a splashing in the water with a stick, which they took care to be provided with, and which made these animals fly to such a distance, that they had sufficient time to secure themselves.

The company has a ware-house at this port, as they have at the Akansas; but the fort and territory belong to a private company, consisting of M. Le Blanc, secretary of state; M. le Comte de Belle-Isle, M. le Marquis d'Arsfeld, and M. le Blond, brigadier Engineer. This last resides in the colony in quality of director-general of the

<sup>6</sup>The Koroa Indians were a tribe allied to the Tunica and the Natchez, with customs much like the latter. In 1702 the Koroa murdered a French Seminary missionary, Father Foucault, coming from the Arkansas post. They then retreated to the Yazoo, their kindred. There they were joined by a band of Choctaw known as the Dog People or Ofogoula, whose village was twelve miles above the mouth of the Yazoo River. In 1729 this latter tribe refused to rebel and joined the Tunica. The Yazoo and Koroa fled eastward and were given refuge among the Choctaw.



company.<sup>7</sup> I cannot well comprehend what has made them pitch upon the river of the Yasous for the place of their grant. They had assuredly much better lands, and more advantageous situations in their choice. 'Tis true, it is a matter of importance to secure this river, the source of which is not far from Carolina; but a fort with a good garrison would have been sufficient for this purpose, as well as to keep the <sup>[252]</sup> Yasous in awe, who are allies to the Chicachas. The being obliged to be always on their guard against the Indians, who border upon the English, is not the way to settle a grant upon a solid foundation.

I left the Yasous on the tenth, and, on the thirteenth, had it not been for a Natché Indian, who asked his passage from me in order to return to his own country, I should have been lost in a whirlpool, with which none of my guides were acquainted, and which cannot be perceived till one is so far engaged with it, that it is impossible to get clear of it. It lies on the left, at the foot of a large cape, where it is said, there is a very good stone quarry: this is what people are most afraid of wanting in this colony, but, to make amends, they may easily make as many bricks as they will.<sup>8</sup>

On the fifteenth we arrived at the Natchez.<sup>9</sup> This canton, the finest, most fertile, and best peopled of all Louisiana, lies at the distance of forty leagues from the Yasous, upon the same side of the river. The landing place is opposite a high and rugged bank, at the foot of which runs a small rivulet, which is capable of receiving only shallops

<sup>7</sup>None of these concessionaires ever saw the Yazoo country except Le Blond de la Tour, who was chief of the commissioners sent out by the king in 1721 to regulate the affairs of the company and also chief engineer of the colony.

<sup>8</sup>Probably this whirlpool was Grand Gulf (le Grand Goufre) at the mouth of Big Black River, where the Mississippi turns sharply to the right and rushes against some large rocks which beat off the current.

<sup>9</sup>The Natchez Indian village of Charlevoix's day was somewhat farther down stream than the historic and present city of Natchez.

and

and pirogues.<sup>10</sup> From this first bank we go up a second, or rather a hill, whose ascent is tollerably easy, on the summit of which stands a redoubt, enclosed by a simple palisade. The name of a fort has been given to this entrenchment.<sup>11</sup>

Several little hills appear above this last, and, when these are once past, we see, on all sides, very large meadows separated from one another by small copses of wood, which produce a very fine effect. The trees most common in these woods are the oak <sup>[253]</sup> and nut-trees; and the soil is every where excellent. The late M. d'Iberville, who first entered the Mississippi by its mouth,<sup>12</sup> having penetrated as far up as the Natchez, found the country so delightful, and so advantageously situated, that he concluded the metropolis of the new colony could no where be better placed; and accordingly traced out the plan of it, and intended to call it by the name of *Rosalie*, which is that of the lady of the chancellor Pontchartrain. But it should seem this project was not to be put in execution so soon, tho' our geographers have always thought fit to lay down in their maps the town of *Rosalie* at the Natchez.

'Tis certain it was necessary to begin by a settlement nearer the sea; but if ever Louisiana becomes a flourishing colony, as it may very well happen, it is my opinion there cannot be a better situation for a capital than this.<sup>13</sup> It is not liable to be overflowed by the river, has a very pure air, and a great extent of country; the soil is well

<sup>10</sup>St. Catharine's Creek, Adams County, Mississippi, upon which were located most of the nine villages that composed the Natchez confederacy.

<sup>11</sup>This fort named *Rosalie* in honor of the Countess de Pontchartrain, was built in 1716 by Bienville. It was utterly destroyed in the revolt of 1729. The commandant at the time of Charlevoix's visit was M. de Barnaval.

<sup>12</sup>For Pierre le Moyne Sieur d'Iberville see *ante*, letter II, vol. I, 97, note 32.

<sup>13</sup>The question of the site for the capital of the colony was a burning one at this time. Bienville, the governor, favored the newly founded town of New Orleans; Hubert, the commissary, favored Natchez.

watered,

watered, and proper for producing every thing. Nor is it at too great a distance from the sea, and there is nothing to prevent shipping from going up to it. Lastly, it is at a convenient distance from all those places where there can be any design of making settlements. The company have a magazine, and keep a principal factor here, who, as yet, has very little to do.

Amongst a great number of private grants, which are already in a condition to produce something valuable, there are two of the largest extent that is allowed, being each four leagues square; one belonging to a company of *Maloins*, the inhabitants of it, and which they bought of M. Hubert, <sup>[254]</sup> commissary in chief, and president of the council in Louisiana;<sup>14</sup> and the other to the company, who have sent work-men thither from Clerac, in order to make tobacco.<sup>15</sup> These two grants are situated in such a manner, as to form a perfect triangle with the fort, the distance of one angle from the other being one league. Half way between the two grants lies the great village of the Natchez. I have carefully visited all these places, and here follows what I have observed most remarkable in them.

The grant of the Maloins is well situated, and nothing is wanting to make it turn out to advantage but Negroes, or hired servants. I should rather chuse to employ the latter, because, the time of their service being expired,

<sup>14</sup>Louisiana was governed by a governor-general and a commissary-general, the latter of whom took the place of the intendant in Canada, and like him presided at the council. Hubert, a merchant of St. Malo, was appointed in 1717 "commissaire ordonnateur" and served until 1721, when he was superseded. He then formed a company of St. Malo friends to develop his concession at the Natchez. Early in 1722 he ascended the Mississippi with sixty workmen and opened a large plantation on St. Catherine's Creek, building a mill and a forge, and making arrangements for permanent occupation. In 1723, however, he sold his concession and returned to France.

<sup>15</sup>The Cléracs were the workers in tobacco at the town of Clérac in the present Charente Inférieure, France. Their agent Montplaisir accompanied Hubert to the Natchez and was accorded by him a large grant, as herein described.

they

they become inhabitants, and increase the number of the king's natural subjects; whereas the former always continue aliens: and who can be certain but that, by being multiplied in our colonies, they may not one day become our most formidable enemies! Can we depend upon slaves who are only attached to us by fear, and who never can have the pleasure of calling the place in which they are born by the endearing name of their native country?

The first night I lay in this settlement, there happened a great alarm about nine o'clock in the evening; upon asking the reason of it, I was told there was, in the neighbourhood, a beast of an unknown species, of an extraordinary bulk, and whose cry did not in the least resemble that of any known animal. Nobody however could say he had seen it, and they formed a judgment of its size entirely from its strength: it had already carried off some sheep and calves, and worried some cows. I <sup>[255]</sup> told those who gave me this account, that an enraged wolf might very well have done all this, and that, as to its cry, people were deceived in these matters every day. I could persuade nobody, they still would have it that it was some monstrous beast. It was heard again, and every one ran out armed with what he could find, but it was to no purpose.

The company's grant is still more advantageously situated than that of the Maloins. The same river waters both, and falls into the Mississippi, two leagues from this place; a magnificent forest of cypress trees forms a barrier to it, and covers all the back settlements.

I have seen in the garden of the *Sieur le Noir*, the principal factor, a very fine cotton tree, and, a little lower, we begin to find wild Indigo.<sup>16</sup> A trial of it has not yet been

<sup>16</sup>Indigo was successfully cultivated in Louisiana by 1724, and thereafter became one of its staple exports.

made,



made, but there is reason to believe that it will succeed as well as that which was found on the island of St. Domingo, where it is as much esteemed as the Indigo transported from foreign parts. Besides, experience informs us that a soil which produces this plant naturally is very well adapted to receive foreign seed.

The great village of the Natchez<sup>17</sup> is at present reduced to a small number of cabbins; the reason of which, I am told, is, that the Indians, whose great chief has a right to take every thing from them, remove to as great a distance from him as they possibly can, by which means several villages of these people have been formed at some distance from this. The *Tious*, their allies and ours, have one likewise in their neighbourhood.<sup>18</sup>

[<sup>256</sup>] The cabbins of the great village of the Natchez, the only one I have seen, are in the form of square pavilions, very low, and without windows. Their roofs are rounded pretty much in the same manner as an oven. Most of them are covered with the leaves and straw of maize. Some of them are built of a sort of mud, which seemed tolerably good, and is covered outside and inside with very thin mats. That of the great chief is rough-cast very handsomely in the inside:<sup>19</sup> it is likewise larger and higher than the rest, being placed in a more elevated situ-

<sup>17</sup>The problem of the origin of the Natchez tribe has not been fully solved, although it is now held that their language was probably a dialect of the Muskogean stock. Around the great village of the Natchez proper were clustered eight others in alliance with or subordinate to this tribe, some of them of alien stock. The Natchez in 1682 were estimated by La Salle at six thousand souls with twelve hundred warriors. After their three wars with the French in 1716, 1723, and 1729-30 they were scattered and became, as a tribe, extinct. There are still some remnants of this tribe among the Choctaw in Oklahoma.

<sup>18</sup>The Tioux Indians were a tribe allied to the Natchez who occupied the villages of Tougoulas and Thoucoue.

<sup>19</sup>One peculiarity of the Natchez was the position of the head chief, who unlike those of most Indian tribes had despotic powers. Compare, however, the position of the chieftainship among the Miami, noted *ante*, letter XXII, 95, note 17.

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ation, and has no cabbins adjoining to it. It fronts a large square, which is none of the most regular, and looks to the north. All the moveables I found in it were a bed of planks very narrow, and raised about two or three feet from the ground; probably when the chief lies down he spreads over it a matt, or the skin of some animal.

There was not a soul in the village, all of them having gone to a neighbouring village, where there was a festival. All their doors were open, but there was not any thing to be feared from thieves, as nothing remained but the four walls. These cabbins have no vent for the smoke, notwithstanding those into which I entered were tolerably white. The temple stands at the side of the chief's cabin, facing the east, and at the extremity of the square. It is built of the same materials with the cabbins, but of a different shape, being an oblong square, forty feet in length, and twenty in breadth, with a very simple roof, in the same form as ours.<sup>20</sup> At each extremity there is something like a weather-cock of wood, which has a very coarse resemblance of an eagle.

[<sup>257</sup>] The gate is in the middle of the length of the building, which has no other opening: on each side there are seats of stone. What is within is quite correspondent to this rustic outside. Three pieces of wood, joined at the extremity, and placed in a triangle, or rather at an equal distance from one another, take up almost the whole middle space of the temple, and burn slowly away. An Indian, whom they call keeper of the temple, is obliged to tend them, and to prevent their going out. If the weather is cold he may have a fire for himself, for he is not allowed to warm himself at this, which burns in honour of the sun.

<sup>20</sup>The Natchez and their kin the Tunica appear to have been the only tribe north of Mexico to have appropriated a special building for worship.

This

This keeper was also at the festival; at least I did not see him, but his brands occasioned a smoke which almost blinded us.

Ornaments I saw none, nor any thing indeed which could inform me that this was a temple. I saw only three or four boxes lying in disorder, with a few dry bones in them, and some wooden heads on the ground, of somewhat better workmanship than the eagles on the roof. In short, if it had not been for the fire, I should have believed this temple had been deserted for some time, or that it had been lately plundered. Those cones, wrapt up in skins, the dead bodies of the chiefs ranged in a circle within a temple intirely round, and terminated in the manner of a dome, those altars, &c. of which some accounts make mention, of all these I have seen nothing; and, if ever such things were to be seen, they have been greatly changed since that time.<sup>21</sup>

But, as no one ought absolutely to be condemned while there is a shadow of an excuse for him, it is <sup>[258]</sup> possible that the neighbourhood of the French made the Natchez apprehensive of losing the dead bodies of their chiefs, and whatever was most precious in their temple, for which cause they have carried them elsewhere; and that the little regard they pay to their temple at present is owing to its having been stript of whatever was held most sacred amongst them. It is however true, that, close by the wall, and opposite to the gate, there is a table, the dimensions of which I was not at the trouble to take, as I had then no sus-

<sup>21</sup> The customs of the Natchez had awakened much interest among the French and had been described at great length. Among the authorities with which Charlevoix was probably familiar was the spurious journal of Tonti published in 1697; the relation of Penicaut (1703), see Margry, V, 444-456; and the letters of Father Gravier, *Jesuit Relations*, lxxv, 135-145. A letter of Father le Petit in *ibid.*, lxxviii, 123, confirms the account of the bodies of chiefs wrapped in conelike form.

picion of its being an altar. I have been since informed, that it is three feet in height, five in length, and four in breadth.

I have further heard, that they make a small fire on it with the bark of the oak, which never goes out, but this is false, for I saw no fire, nor any thing from which it could be imagined there ever was a fire there. They say likewise that four old men lie in the temple by turns, in order to keep up this fire; that he who is upon guard must not go out during the eight days he is upon duty; that they take the lighted charcoal of the logs that are burning in the middle of the temple, to put upon the altar; that twelve men are employed in providing oak-bark; that there are monkeys of wood, and the figure of a rattle-snake, likewise of wood, placed upon the altar, to which they pay great honours: that when their chief dies he is buried, and, when they imagine his flesh is consumed, the keeper of the temple takes up his bones, washes them, wraps them up in their most precious robes, places them in large baskets made of canes, which he covers with deer skins, and disposes them before the altar, where they remain till the death of the reigning chief; and that then he shuts them up within <sup>[259]</sup> the altar itself, in order to make room for the bones of him who died last.

With respect to the last article, I can easily say, that I saw a few bones in one or two of the trunks; that they would not have made one half of those belonging to the human body; that they seemed very old, and lay not on the table which is called the altar. As to the other articles, first, as I never was in the temple but in the day time, I am entirely ignorant of what passes there during the night; and, in the next place, there was no watch in the temple when I was there. I observed, as I have already said, some wooden monkeys, but saw no figure of a serpent.

What

What I have seen in some relation, of this temple being hung with tapestry, of its pavement being covered with matts of canes, of its being kept in the greatest neatness, and of their carrying to it every year the first fruits of their harvest, must certainly be read with great allowances. On the contrary, I have never seen any thing more slovenly, or in greater disorder. The billets of wood were burning upon the bare ground, on which there was no matts, no more than on the walls. M. le Noir, who was with me, only told me, that every day he put a fresh billet to the fire, and, at every new moon they provided wood for the whole month. He had this however only from hear-say, for this was the first time he had seen the temple as well as myself.

Here follows what I have been able to learn of the nation of the Natchez in general.<sup>22</sup> In their external appearance they differ in nothing from the other Indians of Canada and Louisiana. They <sup>[260]</sup> seldom make war, and do not place their glory in destroying their fellow creatures. What distinguishes them more particularly is the form of their government, which is entirely despotic; the great dependance in the subject, which reaches even to a sort of slavery; a greater degree of haughtiness and grandeur in their chiefs, and a pacific spirit, from which however, for some years past, they have deviated a little.

The Hurons believe, as well as they, their chiefs descended from the sun, but there are none of them who will be his slave, and follow him to the other world to have the honour of serving him there, as frequently happens among the Natchez. Garcilasso de la Vega speaks of this nation as a very powerful people, and it is not quite six years

<sup>22</sup> Charlevoix obtained much of the general description which follows from Father le Petit, superior of his order at New Orleans. See how closely he follows and condenses le Petit's description in *Jesuit Relations*, lxxviii, 121-165.

since



since that they reckoned four thousand warriors amongst them. It appears that they were still more numerous in the time of M. de la Sale, and even when M. d'Iberville discovered the mouth of the Mississippi, whereas at present they cannot send two thousand fighting men into the field.<sup>23</sup> This decrease of their numbers is attributed to contagious distempers, which for some years past have made great havock amongst them.

The grand chief of the Natchez bears the name of Sun, and, as among the Hurons, the son of his nearest female relations always succeeds him. This person has the quality of woman-chief, and great honours are paid her, tho' she seldom meddles in affairs of government. She has, as well as the chief himself, the power of life and death, and it is an usual thing for them to order their guards, whom they call *Allouez*, to dispatch any one who has the misfortune to be obnoxious to either. <sup>[261]</sup> *Go rid me of this dog*, say they, and they are instantly obeyed. Their subjects, and even the chiefs of their villages, never come into their presence without saluting them thrice, and raising a cry, or rather a sort of howling. They do the same thing when they withdraw, and always retire going backwards. When they meet them they are obliged to stop, range themselves in order on the road, and howl in the manner above mentioned till they are past. They are likewise obliged to carry them the best of their harvest, and of the product of their hunting and fishing. In fine, no one, not even their nearest relations, and those who compose their nobility, when they have the honour to eat with them, have a right to drink out of the same cup, or put their hands in the same dish.

<sup>23</sup> See 239, note 17, *ante*, for another estimate. The one here cited includes apparently all the allies and confederates of the Natchez.



Every morning, as soon as the sun appears, the grand chief stands at the door of his cabin, turns his face towards the east, and howls thrice, prostrating himself to the ground at the same time. A calumet is afterwards brought him, which is never used but upon this occasion; he smoaks, and blows the tobacco first towards the sun, and then towards the other three quarters of the world. He acknowledges no master but the sun, from whom he pretends he derives his origin. He exercises an absolute power over his subjects, whose lives and goods are entirely at his disposal, and they can demand no payment for any labour he requires of them.

When the grand chief, or the woman-chief, die, all the Allouez are obliged to follow them to the other world, nor are they the only persons who have this honour: for it is certainly reckoned one, <sup>[262]</sup> and as such, greatly sought after. The death of a chief has been sometimes known to cost the lives of above a hundred persons, and I have been told there are few Natchez of any considerable note who die without being attended to the country of souls, by some of their relations, friends, or servants. It appears from the different relations I have seen of these horrible ceremonies that there is much variation in them. Here follows an account of the obsequies of a woman-chief, which I had from a traveller who was an eye-witness of it, and on whose sincerity I have good reason to depend.<sup>24</sup>

The husband of this woman not being noble, that is to say, of the family of the sun, his eldest son, according to custom, strangled him.<sup>25</sup> Afterwards every thing was taken out of the cabin, and a sort of triumphant car was

<sup>24</sup> This description is taken from Penicaut's relation. See 241, note 21, *ante*.

<sup>25</sup> The nobles and commons of the Natchez practiced exogamy between their two divisions, so that even the sister of the Sun, or great chief, married a commoner.

erected of it, on which were placed the body of the deceased and that of her husband. Immediately after, twelve little children whom their parents had strangled, by order of the eldest son of the woman-chief, who succeeded to her dignity, were laid around the carcasses. This done, they erected in the publick square fourteen scaffolds adorned with branches of trees and stuffs, on which were painted various figures. These scaffolds were designed for an equal number of persons, who were to attend the woman-chief to the other world. Their relations stood round them, looking upon the permission given them, to sacrifice themselves in this manner, as the greatest honour that could be done to their families. They are sometimes ten years in soliciting this favour before-hand, and those who obtain it, are obliged to spin the cord themselves with which they are to be strangled.

[263] They appeared on the scaffolds dressed in their richest habits, each having a large shell in his right hand. Their nearest relation stood on the same hand, having a battle-ax in his left, and the cord which is to do the execution under his left arm. From time to time he sings the death-cry, at which the fourteen victims come down from the scaffolds, and dance all together in the square before the temple, and the cabbin of the woman-chief. This and the following days great respect is paid them, each has five domestics to attend him, and their faces are painted red. Some add, that during the eight days preceding their death, they wear a red ribband on their leg, and that all that time every one is sollicitous to regale them. Be this as it will, at the time I am now speaking of, the fathers and mothers of the strangled children took them in their arms, and disposed themselves on each side of the cabbin, the fourteen destined to die, placed themselves in  
the

the same manner, and were followed by the friends and relations of the deceased, who had all their hair cut off, which is their way of mourning: all this time they made the air resound with such frightful cries, that one would have thought all the devils in hell had broke loose, in order to come to howl in this place; this was followed with dances and songs; those who were to die danced, and the relations of the woman-chief sung.

At last the procession began. The fathers and mothers carrying their dead children appeared first, walking two and two, and went immediately before the litter, in which was the corpse of the woman-chief, carried on the shoulders of four men. The rest followed in the same order. At every ten <sup>[264]</sup> paces the children were thrown upon the ground, those who carried the litter trampling upon them so that when the procession arrived at the temple, their little bodies were quite torn to pieces.

While they were interring the corpse of the woman-chief in the temple, the fourteen persons destined to die were undressed and seated on the ground before the gate, having each two Indians about him, one seated on his knees, and the other holding his hands behind him. The cords were passed round their necks, their heads were covered with the skin of a roe-buck, and after being made to swallow three pieces of tobacco, and to drink a glass of water, the relations of the woman-chief, who sung all the time, drew the cords at each end till they were strangled. After which all the carcasses were thrown together into a ditch and covered with earth.

When the grand chief dies, his nurse, if still alive, must die likewise. But it has often happened, that the French not being able to prevent this barbarity, have obtained leave to baptize the children who were to be strangled, and  
thus

thus have prevented their accompanying those in whose honour they were strangled, to their pretended paradise.

I know no nation on the continent, where the sex is more disorderly than in this. They are even forced by the grand chief and his subalterns to prostitute themselves to all comers, and a woman is not the less esteemed for being public. Though polygamy is permitted and the number of wives which a man may have is unlimited, yet every one, <sup>[265]</sup> for the most part contents himself with one, whom he may divorce at pleasure; but this, however, is a liberty never used by any but the chiefs. The women are tolerably well-looking for savages, and neat enough in their dress, and every thing belonging to them. The daughters of a noble family are allowed to marry none but private men; but they have a right to turn away their husband when they think proper, and marry another, provided there is no alliance between them.

If their husbands are unfaithful to them, they may cause them to be put to death, but are not subject to the same law themselves: on the contrary, they may entertain as many gallants as they please, without the husband's daring to take it amiss, this being a privilege attached to the blood of the sun. He stands in a respectful posture, in the presence of his wife, never eats with her, salutes her in the same manner as the rest of her domesticks, and all the privilege which this burthensome alliance procures him, is an exemption from travel and some authority over his wife's servants.

The Natchez have two chiefs of war, two masters of ceremonies for the temple, two officers to regulate the proceedings in treaties of peace and war, one who has the inspection of the works, and four more who are charged with the management of the publick feasts. The grand  
chief



chief disposes of these employments, and those on whom he confers them are respected and obeyed as himself. Their harvest is in common, the chief appoints the day, and assembles the village. About the end of July he appoints another day, for the commencement of <sup>[266]</sup> a festival, to continue for three days which are spent in games and feasting.

Every private person contributes to this, from the produce of his hunting and fishing, and from his other provisions, consisting of maize, beans and melons. The grand chief commonly called the sun, and the woman-chief preside at this festival in an elevated lodge, which is covered with foliage: they are carried thither in a litter, and the former holds in his hand a sort of scepter adorned with feathers of various colours. All the nobility sit round them in a posture of respect. On the last day the chief harangues the assembly, and exhorts them all to be exact in fulfilling their duty, especially to preserve a great veneration for the spirits who reside in the temple, and to give good instructions to their children. If any one has signalized himself by a publick-spirited action, he makes his eulogium. Twenty years ago the temple was reduced to ashes by lightning, seven or eight women threw their children into the flames, in order to appease the genii; the chief immediately had these heroines before him, gave them publickly the highest praises, and concluded his discourse, by exhorting the rest of the women to imitate, when occasion offered, so great an example.<sup>26</sup>

The heads of families never fail to carry to the temple the first fruits of all they gather, and the presents made to the nation, are disposed of in the same manner. They are

<sup>26</sup>This description is taken from Gravier, *Jesuit Relations*, lxy, 137, who was an eyewitness of this event.



laid before the door of the temple, and the keeper after having offered them to the spirits, carries them to the chief who disposes them as he sees proper. The seed which is to be thrown into the ground is, in like manner, <sup>[267]</sup> offered before the temple with great ceremony; but the offerings made of bread and flour at every new-moon, are for the benefit of the keepers of the temple.

The marriages of the Natchez differ but little from those of the Indians of Canada: the principal difference consists in the bridegroom's making presents to the parents of the young woman he is to espouse,<sup>27</sup> and in the nuptials being followed by a great feast. None but the chiefs have above one wife, the reason of which is, that they having their lands cultivated by the people at no expence, do not find the number of their wives burthensome to them. The chiefs marry with still less ceremony than the people. It is sufficient for them to give notice to the relations of the girl upon whom they have cast their eyes, that they enrol her into the number of their wives; but they keep only one or two in their own cabbins, the rest remaining with their relations, whom they visit when they think fit. There is no such thing as jealousy in these marriages; on the contrary, the Natchez, without any ceremony, lend one another their wives, and this is probably the reason of the facility with which they part with them, in order to take other wives.

When a war-chief wants to levy a party, he plants in a place appointed for that purpose two trees adorned with feathers, arrows, and battle-axes; all painted red as well as the trees, which are likewise marked on that side on which the expedition is to set out. Those who incline to

<sup>27</sup>The custom of gift-giving to the parents of the young woman, on the part of the bridegroom, was not exceptional, but usual among all Indian tribes.

enlist, present themselves before the chief dressed in the best manner, with their faces dawbed all over with different colours, and make known their desire of <sup>[268]</sup> learning the trade of arms under his conduct, and declare themselves disposed to endure all the fatigues of war, and ready to die, if necessary, for the good of their native country.

When the chief has got the number of soldiers required for the intended expedition, he has prepared a beverage which is called *the medicine of war*. This is a vomit made with a root boiled in water: two pots of this drink are given to every one, which he must swallow one after another and is sure to throw up again with the most violent retches. They are next busied in making preparations, and untill the day fixed for their departure the warriors meet every morning and evening in the square, where, dancing and recounting their greatest exploits in arms, every one sings his death-song. This people are no less superstitious with respect to dreams than the Indians of Canada: there only wants a bad omen to make them return back, even after they have set out on an expedition.<sup>28</sup>

The warriors march in great order, and use great precaution in encamping, and to enable them to rally again. Scouts are frequently sent out on discoveries, but no centinels are set during the night: they put out all the fires, recommend themselves to the genii, and then go to sleep in security, the chief having first warned every one not to snore too loud, and to keep his arms always ready by him and in good condition. The idols are exposed on a branch which hangs towards the enemy, and all the warriors before they lie down pass one after another, with their tomahawk in their hand, before these pretended divinities. Then they <sup>[269]</sup> turn themselves towards the enemy's

<sup>28</sup> See this description enlarged in *Jesuit Relations*, lxviii, 143-147.

country

country pouring forth great menaces, which the winds frequently carry to the other side.

It does not appear that the Natchez during their march, exercise those cruelties on their prisoners which are usual in Canada. When these unhappy wretches arrive at the great village, they are made to sing and dance several days running before the temple, after which they are delivered up to the relations of those who have been killed in the campaign; who upon receiving them burst out into lamentations, and then drying up their tears with the scalps which the warriors have brought home, they tax themselves, in order to recompence those who have given them the slaves, whose lot is always to be burnt.

The warriors change their names as they perform new exploits; they receive them from the old war-chiefs, and these names always bear some relation to the action by which they have merited this distinction; those who for the first time have taken a prisoner or cut off a scalp, must, for the space of a month, refrain from seeing their wives or eating meat. They imagine, that should they fail in this, the souls of those they have killed or burnt would occasion their death, or that the first wound they should receive from an enemy would prove mortal, or at least, that they would gain no farther advantages over their enemies. If the grand chief commands his subjects in person, great care is taken that he do not expose himself too much, less, perhaps, out of zeal for his preservation, than out of fear that the other chiefs of war and principal men of the party, may run the risk of being put to death, for not having taken better care of him.

[270] The jugglers of the Natchez bear a great resemblance to those of Canada, and treat the sick much in the same manner. They are well rewarded, if the sick person  
recovers,

recovers, but if he dies, it often costs them their lives. There is another species of jugglers among this people, who run no less risks than the physicians. These are some worthless old fellows, who, in order to procure subsistence for their families, without being obliged to work, undertake to procure rain or fine weather, according as either is wanted. In spring the people tax themselves, in order to buy from these pretended magicians a favourable season for the fruits of the earth. If rain is required, they fill their mouths with water, and then with a pipe, the extremity of which is pierced into several holes like a funnel, they blow into the air on that side where they perceive a cloud, and all the time playing on a *chichikoué* in one hand, and lifting up their *manitou* into the air with the other, they invoke the clouds with frightful cries, to water the fields of those who have set them at work.

If good weather is demanded, they mount upon the roof of their cabin, making signs to the clouds to pass by, and if they pass and dissipate they dance and sing round their calumets towards heaven. All the time these operations last, they observe a rigorous fast, and do nothing but dance and sing; if they obtain what they have promised they are well rewarded, but if not they are put to death without mercy. But the same persons do not undertake to procure rain and fine weather; their *genii*, say they, have it not in their power to give both.

[271] Mourning amongst those Indians consists in cutting off their hair, in forbearing to paint their faces, and in absenting themselves from the assemblies; but I am ignorant how long it lasts. Nor have I been able to learn whether they celebrate the festival of the dead, of which ceremony I have already given you a description; it seems, that in this nation where all are in some manner slaves to those who  
command,



command, funeral honours are set apart for these alone, and especially for the grand chief and the woman-chief.

Treaties of peace and alliance are concluded with a great deal of form and ceremony, in which the grand chief constantly maintains his dignity like a real sovereign. So soon as he is informed of the day of the arrival of Ambassadors, he gives orders to the masters of the ceremonies to make preparations for their reception, and appoints those who are to take their turns of maintaining the envoys. For it is at the expence of his subjects that he defrays the charge of an embassy. On the day of the entry of the Ambassadors, every one has his place appointed according to his rank, and when these ministers are at the distance of five hundred paces from the grand chief, they make a halt and sing the peace-song.

An embassy, for the most part, consists of thirty men and six women. Six of the best voices put themselves at the head of the train and sing, the rest following them, whilst a *chichikoué* regulates the measure. When the grand chief makes a sign to the ambassadors to draw near, they again begin their march; those who carry the calumet dance and sing, turning themselves on all sides, and making a thousand antick motions, grimaces, and <sup>[272]</sup> contortions. They play the same farce over again round the grand chief, as soon as they have come into his presence; then they stroak him with the calumet from head to foot, and afterwards return to their company.

And now they fill the calumet with tobacco, and holding the fire in one hand, advance all together towards the grand chief, and present him the calumet lighted. They smoke along with him, blowing the first vapour of their tobacco towards the sky, the second towards the earth, and the third all round the horizon. This done they present



sent their calumet to the relations of the grand chief and to the inferior chief. Afterwards they stroak the stomach of the grand chief with their hands, and then rub themselves over the body; lastly, they lay their calumets on forks over against the grand chief, when the orator of the embassy begins his harangue, which continues for an hour.

This being over, a sign is made to the ambassadors, who had hitherto continued standing, to sit down, on seats placed for them, near the grand chief, who makes answer to their discourse, and likewise holds forth for a whole hour. This done, the master of the ceremonies lights a great calumet of peace, and gives it to the ambassadors who smoke with it, and swallow the first draught. Then the grand chief enquires after their health, all those who assist at the audience pay the same compliment, and then they are conducted to the cabbin appointed for their residence, where a grand repast is prepared for them. On the evening of the same day the grand chief pays them a visit; but when they are informed he is about to leave his apartment, in order to do them this honour, they go in <sup>[ 273 ]</sup> quest of him, carry him on their shoulders to their cabbin, and seat him on a large skin. One of them places himself behind him, leaning with both his hands on his shoulders, and gently shaking him for some time, whilst the rest seated on the ground in a circular form, sing their great exploits in war.

These visits are renewed every morning and evening, but at last the ceremonial is changed. The ambassadors erect a post in the middle of their cabbin, round which they all seat themselves: the warriors who accompany the grand chief, being dressed in their richest habits, dance and strike upon the post by turns, recounting at the same time their gallant feats in war; after which they  
make

make presents to the ambassadors. On the next day, these, for the first time, have liberty to walk about in the village, and every evening festivals are prepared for them, consisting only of dances. When they are about to depart, the masters of the ceremonies furnish them with the provisions requisite for their journey, which is always done at the expence of private persons.<sup>29</sup>

The greatest part of the nations of Louisiana, had formerly their temples as well as the Natchez, and in all these temples a perpetual fire is kept up. It should even seem, that the *Maubilians*<sup>30</sup> enjoyed a sort of primacy in religion, over all the other nations in this part of Florida; for when any of their fires happened to be extinguished through chance, or negligence, it was necessary to kindle them again at theirs. But the temple of the Natchez is the only one subsisting at present, and is held in great veneration by all the savages inhabiting this vast continent, the decrease of whose numbers is as considerable, and has been still more sudden, than that <sup>[274]</sup> of the people of Canada, without its being possible to assign the true reason of this event. Whole nations have entirely disappeared within the space of forty years at most; and those who still remain, are no more than the shadow of what they were, when M. de Sale discovered this country.<sup>31</sup> I must now take my leave of your Grace, for reasons which I shall soon have the honour to explain to you.

*I am, &c.*

<sup>29</sup> Compare this account of the envoys with that in *Jesuit Relations*, lxviii, 157–165.

<sup>30</sup> The Mobile were a Muskogean tribe with whom in 1540 De Soto had a battle on Alabama River. When the French came in 1700 they found them on the bay called by their name. They moved down close to the French fort, were Christianized, and were finally extinct by 1761.

<sup>31</sup> In 1682 when La Salle made his first voyage from Illinois to the mouth of the Mississippi. See brief account in Kellogg, *Early Narratives*, 296–304.

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## LETTER THIRTY-FIRST.

*Voyage from the Natchez to New Orleans. Description of the Country and of several Indian Villages, with that of the Capital of Louisiana.*

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NEW ORLEANS, January 10, 1722.

MADAM,

I AM now at last arrived at this famous city of *Nouvelle Orleans*, New Orleans.<sup>1</sup> Those who have given it this name, must have imagined Orleans was of the feminine gender.<sup>2</sup> But of what consequence is this? Custom, which is superior to all the laws of grammar, has fixed it so.

This is the first city, which one of the greatest rivers in the world has seen erected on its banks. If the eight hundred fine houses and the five parishes, which our Mercury<sup>3</sup> bestowed upon it two years ago, are at present reduced to a hundred barracks, placed in no very good or-

<sup>1</sup> The site of New Orleans was pointed out to Iberville on his first voyage in 1699 up the Mississippi River. In 1718 Bienville, who had just been reappointed governor, sent a few Canadian emigrants to clear and occupy the site. In the summer of 1721 the plat of the city was laid out, but little building was done until 1722, when Bienville received the desired permission to transfer the capital to this site.

<sup>2</sup> The city, named for the regent of France, Duc d'Orléans, was given the feminine form from the custom of so calling towns.

<sup>3</sup> *Le Mercure de France*, one of the oldest French newspapers, was founded in 1672 as *Le Mercure Galant*. The name was changed in 1714. The publication continued for over a century. This puff concerning New Orleans appeared during Law's speculative craze.

der;

der; to a large ware-house built of timber; to two or three houses which would be no ornament to a village in France; <sup>[276]</sup> to one half of a sorry ware-house, formerly set apart for divine service, and was scarce appropriated for that purpose, when it was removed to a tent: what pleasure, on the other hand, must it give to see this future capital of an immense and beautiful country increasing insensibly, and to be able, not with a sigh like Virgil's hero, when speaking of his native country consumed by the flames, *et campus ubi Trojæ fuit*,<sup>4</sup> but full of the best grounded hopes to say, that this wild and desert place, at present almost entirely covered over with canes and trees, shall one day, and perhaps that day is not very far off, become the capital of a large and rich colony.

Your Grace will, perhaps, ask me upon what these hopes are founded? They are founded on the situation of this city on the banks of a navigable river, at the distance of thirty-three leagues from the sea, from which a vessel may come up in twenty-four hours; on the fertility of its soil; on the mildness and wholesomeness of the climate, in thirty degrees north latitude; on the industry of the inhabitants; on its neighbourhood to Mexico, the Havana, the finest islands of America, and lastly, to the English colonies. Can there be any thing more requisite to render a city flourishing? Rome and Paris had not such considerable beginnings, were not built under such happy auspices, and their founders met not with those advantages on the Seine and the Tiber, which we have found on the Mississippi, in comparison of which, these two rivers are no more than brooks. But before I engage in the description of what is curious in this place, I shall, to preserve due order, resume my journal where I left off.

<sup>4</sup>“The field where Troy has been.”

I stayed



[277] I stayed among the Natchez much longer than I expected, which was owing to the destitute condition in which I found the French with respect to spiritual assistance. The dew of heaven has not as yet fallen upon this fine country, which is more than any other enriched with the fat of the earth. The late M. d'Iberville had designed a Jesuit for this place, who accompanied him in his second voyage to Louisiana, in order to establish Christianity in a nation, the conversion of which he doubted not would draw after it, that of all the rest; but this missionary on passing through the village of the Bayagoulas, imagined he found more favourable dispositions towards religion there, and while he was thinking on fixing his residence amongst them, was recalled to France, by order of his superiors.<sup>5</sup>

An ecclesiastic of Canada was in the sequel sent to the Natchez, where he resided a sufficient time, but made no proselites, though he so far gained the good graces of the woman-chief, that out of respect to him, she called one of her sons by his name. This missionary being obliged to make a voyage to the *Mobile*, was killed on his way thither by some Indians, who probably had no other motive for this cruel action, but to plunder his baggage,<sup>6</sup> as had before happened to another priest, on the side of the Akansas.<sup>7</sup> From this time forth all Louisiana, below the

<sup>5</sup>This was Father Paul Du Rue (Rhu), born in 1666, who came to Louisiana with Iberville in the autumn of 1699. The founder of Louisiana was partial to the Jesuit order, and desired that priests of that order should be assigned to his new colony. Du Rue was chosen to begin this mission. He acted as chaplain at Biloxi and Mobile, and with his colleague Father Joseph de Limoges labored among the tribes on the lower Mississippi, especially the Huma. In 1702, however, Du Rue was recalled to France, where he died in 1741.

<sup>6</sup>This was Father Jean François St. Cosme, a Seminary priest, Canadian born, who in 1698 came to the West. See his letter in Kellogg, *Early Narratives*, 337-361. His first mission was among the Illinois; then he went to the Natchez, and met death in 1707 at the hands of the Chitimacha Indians.

<sup>7</sup>This was Father Nicolas Foucault. See *ante*, letter XXX, 234, note 6.

Illinois,



Illinois, has been without any ecclesiastic, excepting the *Tonicas*, who for several years have had a missionary whom they love and esteem, and would even have chosen for their chief, but who has not been able, notwithstanding all this, to persuade one single person to embrace Christianity.<sup>8</sup>

[<sup>278</sup>] But how can we imagine measures are to be taken to convert the infidels, when the children of the faith themselves are, almost all of them, without pastors? I have already had the honour to inform your Grace, that the canton of the Natchez is the most populous of this colony; yet it is five years since the French there have heard mass, or even seen a priest. I was indeed, sensible, that if the greatest number of the inhabitants had an indifference towards the exercises of religion, which is the common effect of the want of the sacraments; several of them, however, expressed much eagerness to lay hold of the opportunity my voyage afforded them, to put the affairs of their conscience in order, and I did not believe it my duty, to suffer myself to be much entreated on this occasion.

The first proposal made to me was to marry, in the face of the Church, those inhabitants, who by virtue of a civil contract, executed in presence of the commandant and principal clerk of the place, had cohabited together without any scruple, alledging, for excuse, along with those who had authorized this concubinage, the necessity there was of peopling the country, and the impossibility of procuring a priest. I represented to them, that there were priests at the Yamous and New Orleans, and that the affair was well worth the trouble of a voyage thither; it was

<sup>8</sup> Father Antoine Davion, who came out with Montigny and St. Cosme in 1698. See account of Davion's mission, 263, *post*.

answered,

answered, that the contracting parties were not in a condition to undertake so long a journey, nor of being at the expence of procuring a priest. In short, the evil being done, the question was only how to remedy it, which I did. After this, I confessed all those who offered themselves; but their number was not so great as I expected.

[279] Nothing detaining me longer at the Natchez, I set out from thence on the 26th of December pretty late, in company with M. de Pauger, King's engineer, who was employed in visiting the colony, in order to examine the proper places for building forts.<sup>9</sup> We advanced four leagues, and encamped on the banks of a small river on the left; next day we reimbarked two hours before it was light, with a pretty strong wind against us. The river in this place makes a circuit or winding of fourteen leagues, and according as we turned, the wind being reflected by the land, and the islands which are here in great number turned with us, so that we had it the whole day in our teeth. Notwithstanding we got ten leagues farther, and entered another small river on the same side. The whole night we heard a very great noise, which I imagined was the effect of the winds growing stronger; but I was told that the river had been very calm, and that the noise which kept us awake had been occasioned by the fishes beating the water with their tails.

On the 28th, after advancing two leagues farther, we arrived at the river of the *Tonicas*,<sup>10</sup> which at first appears to be no more than a brook; but at the distance of a musket-shot from its mouth, forms a very pretty lake. If

<sup>9</sup>Pauger was assistant engineer of the colony. Bienville sent him in the summer of 1721 to trace the plat of New Orleans, and afterwards to visit the upper river.

<sup>10</sup>The Homochitta River. The Tunica formerly lived on the Yazoo. In 1706 they were expelled from that locality by the Chickasaw, and fled southward to the habitat of the Huma, whom they displaced.

the

the river continues to carry its stream or course towards the other side, as it has done for some time past, all this place will become inaccessible. The river of the Tonicas rises in the country of the *Tchactas*,<sup>11</sup> and its navigation is very much interrupted with falls or rapid currents. The village stands beyond the lake on a pretty eminence; yet its air is said to be unwholesome, which is attributed to the bad quality of the water of the river; but I am rather of opinion, it is owing to the stagnation of the waters <sup>[280]</sup> in the lake. This village is built round a very large square, and is indifferently populous.

The chief's cabbin is finely decorated for an Indian's, on the outside; on which there are figures in relief, not so badly executed as one would expect. It is very obscure within doors, and I could see nothing in it but chests, full, as I was told, of goods and money. The chief received us very politely, he was dressed after the French fashion, and seemed in no-ways incommoded with his cloaths. Our commandants repose greater confidence in this man, than in any other of the Indians of Louisiana: he loves our nation, and has no reason to repent the services he has done us. He carries on a trade with the French, supplying them with horses and poultry, and is very expert at business. He has learned from us the art of laying up money, and is accounted very rich. He has long left off wearing the Indian habit, and takes great pride in appearing always well-dressed.

The rest of the cabbins in this village are partly square, like that of the chief, and partly round, as at the Natchez; the square upon which they all stand is about a hundred

<sup>11</sup>The country of the Choctaw was southern and central Mississippi, extending as far east as Georgia. This Muskogean tribe was one of the largest in the South, being composed in 1700 of fifteen to twenty thousand Indians. In 1904 the Choctaw numbered about the same. As a rule the members of this tribe were friendly to the French.

paces in diameter, where though it was that day extremely hot, the young people were diverting themselves at a sort of truck, not unlike ours in Europe. There are two other villages belonging to this nation at no great distance from this, which are all that remains of a people heretofore very numerous.<sup>12</sup> I have already observed, that they had a missionary whom they greatly esteemed, but have since learned they once expelled him, on account of his setting their temple on fire, which, however, they have not rebuilt or rekindled its fire, a certain proof of their indifference [<sup>281</sup>] with respect to religion: soon after they even recalled the missionary, but he in his turn has now left them, on finding they listened to all he was able to say with an indolence which he was unable to get the better of.<sup>13</sup>

From the bottom of the lake or bay of the Tonicas, were we to use canoes of bark, by a carrying place of two leagues, ten might be saved in the navigation of the river. Two leagues lower than the Tonicas, on the right-hand, is Red-river, or *Rio Colorado*, at the entrance of which the famous Ferdinand de Soto, the conqueror of Florida, ended his exploits and life together.<sup>14</sup> This river runs east and west for some time, and then turns to the south. For the space of forty leagues it is navigable for pirogues, beyond which are nothing but impassable morasses. Its mouth

<sup>12</sup>The Tunica Indians were a tribe with a distinct language, very musical in sound. They were always loyal to the French; a few still live in Louisiana.

<sup>13</sup>This was Father Antoine Davion, who joined the Tunica in 1699; retired for a time to Mobile and rejoined his mission in 1704. About the time of Charlevoix's visit he had gone to New Orleans, where he remained until 1727, returning to France for his last years.

<sup>14</sup>Father Martin, the historian of Louisiana, agreed with Charlevoix on the site of De Soto's death. Recent examination of the sources leads to the conclusion that the village where he died was near the mouth of the Arkansas River. See Frederick Hodge, *Spanish Explorers in the Southern United States*, Original Narratives Series (New York, 1907), 227.

seems



seems to be about two hundred toises in breadth; ten leagues above, it receives on the right-hand Black-river, otherwise called the river of the Ouatchitas,<sup>15</sup> which runs from the north, and for seven months in the year, has little or no water in it.

Notwithstanding, some grants have been obtained here, which, in all probability, never will be good for anything; the motive for these settlements is the neighbourhood of the Spaniards, which has ever been a fatal temptation to this colony, and through the hopes of trading with them, the best lands in the world have been left uncultivated. The *Natchitoches* are settled on the banks of the Red-river, and we have thought proper to build a fort amongst them, in order to prevent the Spaniards from fixing themselves nearer us.<sup>16</sup> We encamped on the 29th, a little below the mouth of the Red-river, in a very fine creek.

[282] On the 30th, after advancing five leagues, we passed a second *pointe coupée*, or cut point; the river makes a very great turning in this place, and the Canadians, by means of digging the channel of a small brook, have carried the waters of the river into it, where such is the impetuosity of the stream, that the point has been entirely cut through, and thereby travellers save fourteen leagues of their voyage. The old bed is now actually dry, having never any water in it, but in the time of an inundation; an evident proof that the river inclines its channel towards the east, and a circumstance which can-

<sup>15</sup> So named for the Ouachita, a small Caddoan tribe living on this stream, who early disappeared.

<sup>16</sup> The Natchitoch Indians were a Caddoan tribe whose habitat was near the present city of Natchitoches, Louisiana. Tonti visited their village in 1690 and Bienville in 1700. In 1712 St. Denis built a fort at this place, which was garrisoned two years later, and was maintained as a useful outpost for about a century. Ruins of this early post may yet be seen.



not be too much attended to, by those who settle on either side. This new channel has been, since that time, sounded with a line of thirty fathoms, without finding any bottom.<sup>17</sup>

Immediately below and on the same side, we saw the feeble beginnings of a grant, called *Sainte Reine*, belonging to Messrs. Coetlogon and Kolli. It is situated on a very fertile spot, and has nothing to fear from the overflowing of the river; but from nothing, nothing can proceed, especially when people are not industrious, and in such a situation this settlement appeared to be.<sup>18</sup> Advancing a league farther this day, we arrived at the grant of Madame de Mezieres, where the rain detained us all the following day.<sup>19</sup> A few huts covered with the leaves of trees, and a large tent made of canvas, are what the whole of this settlement at present consists of. Planters and goods are expected from the Black-river, where the warehouses are, which they seem resolved not to abandon. But I am very much affraid, that by endeavouring to make two settlements at once, both will probably miscarry.

[<sup>283</sup>] The soil where this last is begun is very good, but it must be built a quarter of a league from the river, behind a cypress wood, where the bottom is marshy, which may be employed in raising rice or garden-stuff. Two leagues farther within the woods is a lake two leagues in

<sup>17</sup> Pointe Coupée in the parish of that name, Louisiana.

<sup>18</sup> In the reign of Law's company concessions of vast extent were made to prominent capitalists and noblemen of France. It was estimated that for a concession or grant of four square leagues 200,000 livres were needed to develop it and about two hundred workmen. From 1718 to 1721 workmen continued to come, and to be placed on these concessions. Charlevoix's description of their condition is one of the best sources for early Louisiana history.

<sup>19</sup> The Marquis de Mézières was one of the directors of the Mississippi Company; his grant was held in the name of his wife.

circuit,

circuit, the banks of which are covered with game, and which perhaps would also furnish abundance of fish, were the alligators with which it swarms at present destroyed. At this place I learned some secrets which I shall communicate to your Grace at the price they cost me; for I have not had time to make trial of them.

The male cypress in this country bears a sort of husk, which, as they say, must be gathered green, and yields a balm which is sovereign to the cure of cuts or wounds. The tree from which the copalm distills, has, among other virtues, that of curing the dropsy.<sup>20</sup> The roots of those large cotton trees, which I have already spoken of, and which are found all along the road from lake Ontario, are a certain remedy for all kinds of burns; the interior pellicle must be boiled in water, the wound fomented with this water, and afterwards the ashes of the pellicle itself laid upon it.

On the first day of the new year we said mass about three leagues from the habitation of Madam de Mezieres, in a grant belonging to M. Diron d'Artaguettes inspector-general of the troops of Louisiana.<sup>21</sup> We had here a monstrous large tortoise brought us; and we were told that these animals had just broke through a large bar of iron; if the fact is true, and to believe it I should have seen it, the spittle of these animals must be a strong dissolvent: I should not, indeed, chuse to trust <sup>[284]</sup> my leg in their throat. What is certain is, that the creature I saw was large enough to satisfy ten men of the strongest appetites. We staid the whole day in this grant, which is no farther

<sup>20</sup> Copalm is the yellowish, fragrant balsam yielded by the sweet gum tree.

<sup>21</sup> Diron d'Artaguettes was the first commissary of the colony who held office from 1708 to 1711. The officer Charlevoix mentions was probably his son. The younger Artaguettes came to his concession in 1718; he lived in Louisiana several years, finally dying while governor of Cap François in San Domingo.

advanced than the rest, and is called *le Baton rouge*, or the Red-staff Plantation.<sup>22</sup>

The next day, we advanced eleven leagues, and encamped a little below the Bayagoulas, which we left upon our right, after having visited the ruins of an ancient village, which I have already mentioned. This was very well peopled about twenty years ago; but the smallpox destroyed part of the inhabitants, and the rest have dispersed in such a manner, that no accounts have been heard of them for several years, and it is doubted if so much as one single family of them is now remaining. Its situation was very magnificent, and the Messrs. Paris have now a grant here, which they planted with white mulberries, and have already raised very fine silk.<sup>23</sup> They have likewise begun to cultivate tobacco and indigo with success. If the proprietors of the grants were everywhere as industrious, they would soon be reimbursed their expences.

On the third of January, at ten in the morning, we arrived at the little village of the *Oumas*, which stands on the left, and has some French houses in it. A quarter of a league farther within the country stands the great village. This nation is very well affected towards us.<sup>24</sup> Two leagues above this, the Mississippi divides into branches: on the right, to which side it has a constant propensity, it has hollowed out for itself a channel called the *fork of the Chetimachas* or *Sitimachas*, which, before it carries its waters

<sup>22</sup> Baton Rouge is the French translation of the Choctaw term "itu-uma," applied to a large pole painted red, placed to mark the boundaries between the Huma and the Bayougoula tribes.

<sup>23</sup> This concession granted to the brothers Paris Duvernay was settled in 1718. They were so far successful that in 1726 silk was listed among the Louisiana exports.

<sup>24</sup> The Huma (Red People) were of Choctaw origin, driven from the Homochitta River in 1706. They continued to dwell near the French, removing later to Bayou la Fourche. The tribe is now extinct.

to the sea, forms a pretty large lake.<sup>25</sup> The nation of the Chetimachas is almost <sup>[285]</sup> entirely destroyed, the few that remain being slaves in the colony.<sup>26</sup>

This day we advanced six leagues beyond the Oumas, and passed the night upon a very fine spot, where the Marquis d'Ancenis has a settlement,<sup>27</sup> which the burning of the publick ware-house and several other accidents happening one after another, have reduced to ruin. The *Colapissas* had built a small village here, which subsisted no long time. On the fourth before noon, we arrived at the great village of the Colapissas.<sup>28</sup> This is the finest in all Louisiana, though there are not above two hundred warriors in it, who, however, have the reputation of being very brave. Their cabbins are in the form of a pavilion, like those of the Sioux; and like them they light fires in them very seldom. They have a double covering, that within being a tissue of the leaves of Lataniers trees, and that without consists of matts.

The chief's cabbin is thirty-six feet in diameter: I have not hitherto seen any of a larger size, that of the chief of the Natchez being no more than thirty. As soon as we came in sight of the village, they saluted us with beat of drum, and we had no sooner landed than I was complimented on the part of the chief. I was surprized, on advancing towards the village, to see the drummer dressed

<sup>25</sup> Bayou Manchac leading to Lake Pontchartrain.

<sup>26</sup> The Chitamacha Indians were a tribe dwelling on the Mississippi in the present Ascension Parish. This was the tribe which murdered St. Cosme. The death of the priest was avenged by Bienville. A few of this ancient people still lingered in Louisiana as late as 1881.

<sup>27</sup> The Marquis d'Ancenis, later the Duc de Béthune, sent from France one hundred persons to his concession, not long before Charlevoix's visit.

<sup>28</sup> The Acolapissa Indians were an offshoot of the Choctaw, first met on the north bank of Lake Pontchartrain. Their name meant "those who listen and see." Iberville enumerated seven villages of this people, who after an epidemic in 1718 removed from Lake Pontchartrain to the site here mentioned thirteen leagues above New Orleans.



in a long fantastical parti-coloured robe. I enquired into the origin of this custom, and was informed that it was not very ancient; that a governor of Louisiana had made a present of this drum to these Indians, who have always been our faithful allies; and that this sort of beadle's coat, was of their own invention. The women here are <sup>[286]</sup> handsomer than those of Canada, and are, besides, extremely neat in their dress.

After dinner we made a progress of five leagues farther, and stopt at a place called *Cannes brûlées*, or *Burnt-canes*, belonging to M. le Comte d'Artagnan, who has a settlement here, which is to serve him as an *entrepôt*, or staple, provided it do not share the same fate with most of the rest. This plantation stands on the left, and the first object that attracted my notice, was a large cross erected on the banks of the river, round which I found them singing vespers.<sup>29</sup> This is the first place of the colony, after leaving the country of the Illinois, where I saw this ceremony of our religion. Two Musquetaires, Messrs. d'Artiguere and de Benac, are the managers of this grant, and it is M. de Benac who has the direction of the plantation of *Cannes brûlées*, together with M. Chevalier, nephew to the mathematical master to the King's pages. They have no priest which is not their fault, there having been one sent them, whom they were obliged to send away for his drunkenness, wisely concluding, that more harm than good was to be expected from a bad priest, in a new settlement, where there was no superior to watch over his conduct. Between the Colapissas and the *Cannes brûlées*, you leave on your right, a place where an Indian nation called the *Taensas* were formerly settled, and who, in the time

<sup>29</sup>The Count d'Artagnan sent eighty men in 1721 to occupy his grant at the Cannes Brûlées.



of M. de la Sale, made a great figure in this colony, but have for some years past entirely disappeared.<sup>30</sup> This has one of the most beautiful situations as well as one of the best soils in all Louisiana. M. de Meuse to whom it has been granted has as yet done nothing in it, notwithstanding he maintains a director who has neither goods nor work-men.<sup>31</sup>

[<sup>287</sup>] We stopped to dine, on the fifth, at a place called the *Chapitoulas*,<sup>32</sup> which is distant only three leagues from New Orleans, at which place we arrived about five o'clock in the evening. The Chapitoulas and some of the neighbouring plantations are in a very good condition, the soil is very fertile and has fallen into the hands of expert and laborious people. They are M. de Breuil and three Canadian brothers, of the name of *Chauvin*, who having brought nothing with them to this country but their industry, have attained to a perfection in that through the necessity of working for their subsistence.<sup>33</sup> They have lost no time, and have spared themselves in nothing, and their conduct affords an useful lesson to those lazy fellows, whose misery unjustly discredits a country, which is capable of producing an hundred fold, of whatever is sown in it.

*I am, &c.*

<sup>30</sup> The Taensa tribe, in manners and customs similar to the Natchez, was living in 1682, when visited by La Salle, on Lake St. Joseph in Tensas Parish, Louisiana. There also Tonti visited these Indians in 1686 and 1690, and there Father Montigny in 1698 began a mission. In 1706 they took refuge among the Bayougoula, who almost destroyed them. From this location south of Bayou Manchac the Taensa removed in 1764 to the Red River.

<sup>31</sup> De Meuse was later granted a concession in Pointe Coupée Parish.

<sup>32</sup> The Choupetoulas was a small group, probably of Choctaw affinity, who by 1718 had abandoned its village. A street in New Orleans is named for this tribe.

<sup>33</sup> De Breuil and the three Chauvin brothers came to Louisiana in 1721, and imported a number of negro slaves to develop their plantation.

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## LETTER THIRTY-SECOND.

*Voyage from New Orleans to the Mouth of the Mississippi.  
Description of that River to the Sea. Reflections on the  
Grants.*

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ISLAND OF THOULOUSE OR BALISE, January 26, 1722.

MADAM,

THE country, in the neighbourhood of New Orleans, has nothing very remarkable; nor have I found the situation of this city so very advantageous, as it has been said to be: there are some who think otherwise, and support their opinion by the following reasons; and I shall afterwards lay before you those which induce me to differ from them. The first is, that a league beyond it, towards the north-east, there is a small river called *le Bayouc de Saint Jean*,<sup>1</sup> or the Creek of St. John, Bayouc in the Indian language signifying a rivulet, which, at the end of two leagues, discharges itself into the lake Pontchartrain which has a communication with the sea, by means of which it would be easy, say they, to keep up a <sup>[290]</sup> trade between the capital Mobile and Biloxi, and with all the other posts we possess near the sea. The sec-

<sup>1</sup>The aboriginal name for this bayou was Tchoupic, meaning muddy. The name was changed to St. Jean in honor of Bienville's patron saint.

ond

ond is, that below the city the river makes a very great turning called *le detour aux Anglois*, or the English reach, which is imagined would be of great advantage to prevent a surprize.<sup>2</sup> These reasons are specious, but do not appear to me to be solid; for, in the first place, those who reason in this manner suppose, that the river at its entrance can only receive small vessels: now in this case, what is to be feared from a surprize, provided the city be fortified, as I suppose it will soon be? Will an enemy come to attack it with shallops, or with vessels which carry no guns? Besides, in whatever place the town be situated, ought not the mouth of the river to be defended by good batteries, and a fort which would at least give them notice to hold themselves in readiness to receive an enemy? In the second place, what necessity is there for a communication, which can only be carried on by means of shallops, with posts which cannot be assisted in case they were attacked, and from which, on the other hand, but a feeble assistance could be drawn, and which, for the most part, would be good for nothing? To this it may be added, that when a vessel goes up the English reach, the wind must change every moment, so that whole weeks may be spent in advancing seven or eight leagues.<sup>3</sup>

A little below New Orleans the soil begins to be very shallow on both sides the Mississippi, and its depth continues to diminish all the way to the sea. This is a point of land which does not appear to be very ancient; for if it be ever so little dug up, water is sure to be found, and the great number of shoals and small islands, which within these <sup>[291]</sup> twenty years have been formed at all the

<sup>2</sup>For this place see 227, note 13, letter XXIX, *ante*.

<sup>3</sup>It is interesting to compare this theoretical discussion of the defense of New Orleans with the actual events of the British invasion of 1814.

mouths of the river, leave no room to doubt that this neck of land has been formed in the same manner. It appears certain, that when M. de Sale went down the Mississippi to the sea, the mouth of this river was quite different from what it is at present.<sup>4</sup>

The nearer we approach the sea, the more sensible this becomes: the bar has little or no water on the greatest part of the out-lets which the river has opened for itself, and which have been so greatly multiplied by means of trees, which have been carried along with the current; and one of them being stopt, by means of its roots or branches, in a place where there is little depth of water, is the occasion of stopping a thousand more. I have seen, two hundred leagues from hence, heaps of them, one of which alone would fill all the timber-yards in Paris. Nothing can then separate the mud from them which the river carries along with it; it serves them as a cement, and covers them by little and little; every fresh inundation leaves a new bed, and after ten years at most the canes and shrubs begin to grow. It is in this manner, that the greatest part of these points of land and islands have been formed, which have so often caused a change in the course of the river.

I have nothing to add to what I have said in the beginning of the foregoing letter, about the present state of New Orleans. The justest notion you can form of it is, to imagine to yourself two hundred persons, who have been sent out to build a city, and who have settled on the banks of a great river, thinking upon nothing but upon putting themselves under cover from the injuries of <sup>[292]</sup> the

<sup>4</sup>In La Salle's day there were three channels or passes from the Mississippi to the sea—the Northeast, South or Middle, and Southwest. La Salle chose the central one, filled up by 1850; while Charlevoix went out by the Northeast Pass. This middle pass has since been reopened by the jetties.

weather,



weather, and in the mean time waiting till a plan is laid out for them, and till they have built houses according to it. M. de Pauger, whom I have still the honour to accompany, has just shown me a plan of his own invention; but it will not be so easy to put it into execution, as it has been to draw it out upon paper. We set out on the 28th, for Biloxi, where the general quarters are.<sup>5</sup> There are no grants between New Orleans and the sea, the soil being of too little depth; but only some small private settlements and *entrepôts*, or staples, for the large grants.

Behind one of these plantations, and immediately below the English reach, stood, not long since, a village of the *Chaouachas*, the ruins of which I have visited. Nothing remains entire but the cabbin of the chief, which bears a great resemblance to one of our peasants' houses in France, with this difference only, that it has no windows. It is built of the branches of trees, the voids of which are filled up with the leaves of the trees called *lataniers*, and its roof is of the same materials. The chief, like all the rest in Florida, is very absolute; he hunts only for his pleasure, for his subjects are obliged to give him part of their game. His village is at present on the other side of the river, half a league lower, and the Indians have transported thither even the bones of their dead.<sup>6</sup>

A little below their new habitation, the coast is much higher than any where else; and it seems to me, this would have been the best situation for a city. It is not above twenty leagues from the sea, and with a moderate south

<sup>5</sup> Biloxi was the site of the first settlement of the French in Louisiana. At that place Fort de Maurepas was built in 1699. In 1702 the capital was removed to Mobile, but eighteen years later headquarters were again carried to Biloxi, where a post was built on a new site. This remained the capital until the transfer in 1722 to New Orleans.

<sup>6</sup> This small tribe of Chaoucha Indians was apparently friendly to the French. During the Natchez war they fell under suspicion and most of them were massacred by the negroes at the order of the French.



or south-east wind, ships might get up to it in fifteen hours. On <sup>1293</sup> the evening of the 23d, we quitted the shallop which had carried us to this place, and embarked on board a brigantine, in which we lay by during the whole night. On the morrow at break of day we found we had passed a new turn in the river, called *le detour aux Piakimines*, or the reach of the Piakimines.<sup>7</sup>

We found ourselves soon after among the passes of the Mississippi; here one must sail with abundance of precaution, for fear of being drawn into one from whence it would be next to impossible to extricate one's self. Most of them are only small streams, and some are separated only by shallows almost level with the water. The bar of the Mississippi is what has multiplied these passes to such a degree, it being easy to conceive, by the way in which I said new lands are formed, how the river endeavouring after a passage where there is the least resistance, opens one, sometimes on one side, sometimes on another; from whence it might happen, without great care to prevent it, that all the passes might become impassable to ships. In the evening of the 24th, we cast anchor without the bar, opposite the Island Balise.<sup>8</sup>

The contrary wind still detaining us, we resolved to make some use of this delay. Yesterday being the 25th, I began by singing grand mass in the island called *de la Balise*, or the Buoy Island, on account of a buoy erected upon it for the convenience of shipping. Afterwards I blessed it, gave it the name of the island *Thoulouse*, and

<sup>7</sup> Called by the Creoles Plaquemine, hence the present Plaquemines Parish through which the Mississippi makes its exit to the Gulf. The word was the Illinois Indian name for the persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*).

<sup>8</sup> Charlevoix took the Northeast Pass and landed on the small island of Balize, long used as a pilot station. Pauger endeavored to develop a post at this point. This island is now some distance inland.

then

then sung *Te Deum*. This island together with another, which is separated from it by a creek where there is always water, is not more than half a league in <sup>[294]</sup> circumference. It is besides very low, excepting one place only which is never overflowed, and where there is room enough to build a fort and ware-houses. Vessels might likewise unload here, which would have difficulty to get over the bar with their cargoes in.

M. de Pauger sounded this place with the lead, and found the bottom pretty hard and clayey, though five or six small springs rise from it, which do not throw up much water, but leave a very fine salt behind them. When the river is at its lowest, that is to say during the three hottest months of the year, the water is salt all round this island; but in the time of the floods it is entirely fresh, and the river preserves its freshness a league out at sea. During the remainder of the year it is a little brackish beyond the bar; consequently it is a mere fable, what has been asserted, that for the space of twenty leagues, the waters of the Mississippi do not mix with those of the ocean.

M. Pauger and I spent the rest of the day with M. Kerlasio, master of the Brigantine, in sounding and surveying the only mouth of the river which was then navigable; and here follow our observations on the condition in which we then found it, for I cannot answer for the changes which may have since happened. It runs north-east and south-west, for the space of three hundred fathoms from the sea to the island of Thoulouse, opposite to which are three small islands, which have as yet no grass upon them, although they are of a tolerable height. For the whole of this space, its breadth is about two hundred and fifty fathoms, and its depth about eighteen feet in the middle; but those <sup>[295]</sup> who are not well acquainted must keep the lead always going.

From

From thence, going up the river, the course lies still north-west, for the space of four hundred fathoms, having all along fifteen foot depth of water and the same bottom; the anchoring ground is every where good, and under cover from all but the south and south-west winds, which might, if violent, cause the vessels to drag their anchors, but without any danger; for they would run upon the bar, which is likewise a soft mud: the course is after this north-west, and one quarter north-east, for the space of five hundred fathoms. This is properly the bar, having twelve foot water middle-depth, but much incumbered with banks and shoals, on which account, great care must be taken in working a vessel; this bar is two hundred and fifty fathoms broad betwixt the low-lands on each side, which are covered with reeds.

In the east channel, which is immediately above the bar, the course is due west, for the space of a league: this is two hundred and fifty fathoms in breadth, and from four to fifteen in depth. Then all of a sudden no bottom is to be found. On taking the large channel after going over the bar, the course is north-west, for the space of three hundred fathoms, where there is always forty-five feet depth of water. You leave the channel of *Sauvole*, on the right-hand, through which there is a passage for shallops to Biloxi, the course of which is northerly: this channel had its name from an officer whom M. d'Iberville, on his return to France, left commandant of the colony.<sup>9</sup>

[296] The course lies afterwards west, one quarter north-west, for the space of fifty fathoms in a sort of bay lying on the left, at the end of which there are three channels more, one running south-south-east, another south,

<sup>9</sup> Sieur de Sauvole came out with Iberville in 1699, and commanded at Biloxi until his death, August 22, 1701.

and

and the third west-south-west. This bay is but ten fathoms in depth and twenty over, and the channels have but little water. Continuing to steer on the same point of the compass, and after running fifty fathoms more, you meet with a second bay on the same side, which is twenty fathoms over, and fifty in depth. This has two little channels, through which canoes of bark would have difficulty to pass, so that, for the most part, no account is made of them.

From hence the course is westerly for the space of five hundred fathoms, when you are opposite to the *passe à la loutre*, or the Otter channel, which lies on the right hand, and runs south-south-east, being a hundred fathom in breadth, but only navigable for pirogues.<sup>10</sup> Afterwards you steer south-west for the space of twenty fathoms, then due west for three hundred: after this west, one quarter north-west, for the space of a hundred, as much west-north-west, and eight-hundred north-west; then you find on your left-hand the south passage, which is two hundred and fifty fathoms in breadth, having nine fathoms depth of water at its entrance on the river side, and only two feet at its opening into the sea.

Two hundred and fifty fathoms farther, lies the south-west passage, nearly of the same breadth but with never less than seven or eight feet water.<sup>11</sup> The country in this place is not so marshy as lower down, but is overflowed during four months <sup>[297]</sup> of the year. It is bounded on the left by a series of small lakes, lying at the end of the lake Chetimachas, and on the right by the *isles de la Chandeleur*, or the Candlemas islands;<sup>12</sup> it is believed that

<sup>10</sup> Still called Pass à la Loutre, a subdivision of the Northeast Pass.

<sup>11</sup> Until the completion of the jetties the Southwest Pass was used by all ships of heavy draft.

<sup>12</sup> Chandeleur Islands lie in a long chain on the eastern boundary of Chandeleur Sound. The bays at its western edge are called lakes.

there



there is a channel for vessels of the greatest burthen, and that it would be very easy to make a very fine harbour among these islands. Large barks can get from the sea to lake Chetimachas, and the finest oaks in the world might be cut there, the whole coast being covered with them.

I am likewise of opinion, that all the channels in the river ought to be stopt up, excepting the principal one, which would be extremely easy, nothing more being required, than to introduce into them those floating trees with which the river is always covered. The consequence of which would be, in the first place, that the river would be no longer accessible to barks and canoes, but upon one side, which would put the colony out of all danger of being surprized; and, in the second place, the whole force of the current being united, the only opening, which the river would then have, would grow deeper as well as the bar. I ground this conjecture upon what has already happened at the two cut points, of which I have already spoken. In this case there would be no more to do than to keep up one channel, and to prevent the floating trees from stopping in it, which, as appears to me, would be no difficult affair.

The breadth of the river between the channels, that is to say, for the space of four leagues from the Island of Thoulouse to the south-west channel, is never more than fifty fathoms. But immediately above this channel, the Mississippi insensibly <sup>[298]</sup> resumes its wonted breadth, which is never less than one mile, and seldom more than two. Its depth continually encreases beyond the bar, which is contrary to what happens in all other rivers, which are commonly deeper as they approach nearer the sea.

Here, Madam, would be an opportunity to give you an account of what has occasioned the failure of those numerous



merous grants, which have made so much noise in France, and upon which so many had founded the greatest hopes; but I rather chuse to refer this to our first meeting, and content myself, at present, with imparting to you some reflections I have made on the manner of settling in this country, if our countrymen are not entirely disgusted at the bad success so many repeated efforts, and useless expences, have been attended with.

It appears to me, that the best place for settlements is not on the banks of the river, but at least a quarter if not half a league back in the country. I am not ignorant, that it is possible to guard against the ordinary inundations of the river by good ditches; but there is a great inconvenience in dwelling upon a soil, which affords water ever so little below the surface, and where, of course, there can be no cellars. I am even of opinion, that it would be very advantageous to leave free room to the annual overflowing of the river, especially for the soil, which is not very dry and would not be useless.

The slime, which remains upon it, after the waters are withdrawn, renews and fattens it; and <sup>[299]</sup> one part might be employed in pasturage, and the other sown with rice, pulse, and, in a word, with every thing which thrives on fat and moist lands. So, that in time, nothing might be seen on both the banks of the Mississippi, but gardens, orchards, and meadows, which would supply the inhabitants with food, and even furnish commodities for carrying on a trade with our islands and the neighbouring colonies. In a word, I believe, I may affirm that, having landed twice or thrice every day, when I was going down the river, there are almost every where, at a very small distance from the banks, high grounds, where houses might be built on a solid foundation; and corn would  
grow

grow extremely well, after the air had got free access to it, by means of clearing away the woods.

The navigation of the river upwards will always be extremely difficult, on account of the strength of the current which even obliges those who are going down to take great care, for it frequently drives them upon points of land and upon shoals; so that, in order to proceed with safety, vessels must be made use of which can both sail and row. Besides, as it is not possible to advance in the night-time, these voyages will always be very tedious and expensive; at least till the banks of the river shall be well peopled, through the whole extent of country, from the Illinois to the sea.

Such, Madam, is the country which has been so much talked of for some years past, and of which so few entertain a just idea. We are not the first Europeans who have been sensible of its <sup>[300]</sup> goodness, and have at the same time neglected it. Ferdinand de Soto went all over it, in the space of three years, and Garcilasso de Vega his historian has not been able to forgive him, for not having made a solid establishment upon it. "Where could he have gone," says he, "to find a better."

In a word, I have met with none, who have been on the spot, who have spoken disadvantageously of Louisiana, but three sorts of persons whose testimony can be of no great weight. The first are the sailors, who, from the road at the island of Dauphine, have been able to see nothing but that island covered with a barren sand, and the coast of Biloxi still more sandy, and have suffered themselves to be persuaded, that the entrance of the Mississippi is impracticable to vessels above a certain bulk; and that the country is uninhabitable for fifty leagues up the river. They would have been of a very different opinion, had they

they had penetration enough to distrust those persons who spoke in this manner, and to discover the motives which made them do so.

The second are wretches, who being banished from France for their crimes or ill-behaviour, true or supposed, or who, in order to shun the pursuits of their creditors, listed themselves among the troops, or hired themselves to the plantations.<sup>13</sup> Both of them, looking upon this country as a place of banishment only, were consequently shocked with every thing: they have no tie to bind them, nor any concern for the progress of a colony of which they are involuntary members, <sup>[301]</sup> and give themselves very little trouble about the advantages it is capable of procuring to the state.

The third are such, who having seen nothing but misery, in a country for which excessive sums have been disbursed, attribute to it, without reflection, what ought solely to be laid to the incapacity or negligence of those who were charged with the settling it. You are, besides, not unacquainted with the reasons for publishing, that Louisiana contained in its bosom immense treasures; and that its value to us was very near equal to the famous mines of St. Barbe,<sup>14</sup> and others still richer, from which we flattered ourselves we should be able to drive the possessors with ease: and because these ridiculous tales found credit with fools, instead of imputing the mistake to themselves, into which their foolish credulity had engaged them, they discharged their ill humour upon this country, in which they found no one article that had been promised them.

*I am, &c.*

<sup>13</sup> Many of the concessionaires sent out convict labor to develop their plantations.

<sup>14</sup> The silver mines of Santa Barbara in Mexico, discovered in 1563, were among the richest in the New World. Between 1704 and 1833 nearly three hundred and fifty million dollars were taken from these mines.

## LETTER THIRTY-THIRD.

*Description of Biloxi. Of the Plant Cassina or Apalachina. Of Myrtle-wax, of the Mobile. Of the Tchactas, of the Bay of St. Bernard. Voyage from Biloxi to New Orleans, by the Way of Lake Pontchartrain.*

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FROM ON BOARD THE ADOUR, April 5, 1722.

M A D A M ,

ON the 26th, after closing my letter, I went on board and we got under sail; but after making a turn to the southward, the wind turning contrary, we were obliged to come to anchor again, where we remained the two following days. On the 29th we weighed early in the morning; but there was so little wind and the sea ran so high, that we got no farther than fourteen leagues, which was not above half the distance we intended. On the 30th, the wind was neither more favour-<sup>[304]</sup>able nor the sea any calmer till towards four o'clock in the evening, when a shower of rain cleared the sky, which was very foggy, and laid the sea: but about an hour or two after, the fog returned and became so thick, that not being able to see our course, we thought it best to come to anchor. The next day, the mist still continuing, M. Pauger and I sailed in the shallop to the road of the island



island *aux Vaisseaux*,<sup>1</sup> and about five in the evening went ashore at Biloxi.

This whole coast is extremely flat, the merchant vessels not being able to approach nearer than four leagues, and the smallest brigantines not nearer than two. These last are even obliged to get farther off, when the wind blows from the north or north-west, or else ly dry, as happened that very night I landed. The road lies all along the island *aux Vaisseaux*, which stretches about a league from east to west, but is very narrow. To the east of this island lies the island *Dauphine*, formerly called *Isle Massacre*,<sup>2</sup> where there was a tolerably convenient harbour, which a blast of wind destroyed in the space of two hours, not much above a year ago, by choaking up its entrance with sand. To the westward of the *isle aux Vaisseaux* are the *isle des Chats*, or of *Bienville*, the *isle à Corne*,<sup>3</sup> and the islands *de la Chandeleur*.

Biloxi is the coast of the main-land, lying to the northward of the road, which name it has from an Indian nation settled here formerly, who have since retired towards the north-west, on the banks of a small river, called the river of pearls,<sup>4</sup> on account of some quantity of bad pearls having been found in it. A worse place than this could not have been chosen for the general quarters of the <sup>[305]</sup> colony, seeing it can receive no assistance from shipping, nor afford them any, for the reasons already mentioned. Be-

<sup>1</sup>Now Ship Island, a United States military reservation.

<sup>2</sup>This island, now called Massacre, was the first site occupied in January, 1699, by the party sent out under Iberville to found Louisiana.

<sup>3</sup>At present these are Cat Island and Horn Island, the former west, the latter east, of Ship Island.

<sup>4</sup>The present Pearl River, boundary between Louisiana and Mississippi. The Biloxi Indians had been supposed to belong to the surrounding Muskhogean family until 1886, when a few survivors on Red River were visited and found to speak a language of Siouan origin. How they reached a spot so distant from the other tribes of this family is not known.

sides,



sides, the road has two great defects, the anchorage is not good, and is full of worms, which destroy all the shipping: and the only advantage that can be drawn from it, is its serving for shelter to vessels in a gale of wind, before they discover the mouth of the Mississippi, which, being low land, it would be dangerous to approach, in bad weather, without having first seen it.

Biloxi is not of more value by land than by sea. The soil is very sandy, producing little but pines and cedars. *Cassina*, otherwise called *Apalachina*, grows here every where in abundance: it is a very small shrub,<sup>5</sup> the leaves of which, infused like those of tea, are reckoned a good dissolvent and an excellent sudorifick, but their principal quality consists in their being diuretick. The Spaniards make great use of it over all Florida: it is even their ordinary drink. It began to be in some repute at Paris when I left it; but that was a bad time for making fortunes, they disappearing or vanishing almost as suddenly as they were acquired. I know, however, that many who use *Apalachina* give it great commendations.

There are two sorts of it, differing only in the size of their leaves. Those of the large species are more than an inch in length, the others are about half as long. In shape and substance they are pretty much like the leaves of the box-tree, excepting that they are rounder towards the extremities, and of a brighter green. The name of <sup>[306]</sup> *Apalachina*, which we have given to this shrub, is derived from the *Apalaches*, a nation of Florida, from whom the Spaniards learned the use of this plant; and here follows the manner of preparing it amongst both nations.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup>The cassioberry shrub (*Viburnum obovatum*), common in the Southern States.

<sup>6</sup>The Apalachee was one of the largest of the native tribes of Florida. When encountered in 1539 by the Spaniards these Indians dwelt around the bay bearing their name. At first they resisted the Spaniards, but gradually were Christianized, and formed

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A quantity of leaves is set on the fire in an earthen pot, and roasted till they become of a reddish colour; they then pour boiling water slowly upon them till the pot is full. This water takes the colour of the leaves, and when decanted off, rises and foams like beer. It is taken as warm as possible, and the Indians would rather refrain from eating, than not drink it morning and evening; they believe they should fall sick should they leave it off; and it is said the Spaniards in Florida entertain the same notion.

Half an hour after it is taken, it begins to discharge itself, and continues doing so about an hour. It is difficult to conceive how a beverage, which does nothing almost but run through one, can be so nourishing, as this is said to be: but it is easier to understand how it cleanses the urinary passages, and prevents distempers in the reins. When the Indians want to purge, they mix it with sea-water, which occasions great evacuations; but if the dose of sea-water be too strong, it may prove mortal, instances of which are not wanting. I have seen it taken in France, but without that apparatus, and in the same manner as they use tea; but the dose is doubled, and it boils near half an hour, and I doubt not but that it is then very efficacious.

[307] There is a species of myrtle with very large leaves found in this country, and which I know to be likewise very common on the coasts of Acadia, and in the English colonies on the continent. Some have given it the name of

a close alliance with the white men. In 1700 they were attacked by a band of Creeks instigated by the English of Carolina. In 1703 and 1704 their country was invaded by a large force from Carolina under Governor James Moore, who captured and carried away a large number of Apalachee as slaves. A remnant fled to the French of Louisiana; the fugitives were kindly received by Bienville and given a home on Mobile River. Records of the baptisms of the Apalachee are found in the earliest Mobile church registers. After the cession in 1763 to England, the Apalachee removed to Red River, where in 1804 a few families were still living on Bayou Rapide.

laurel,

laurel, but falsely, its leaf having the smell of a myrtle, and the English have no other name for it, but that of the candle myrtle, *le myrtle à chandelle*.<sup>7</sup> This shrub bears a small grain, which during the spring is full of a gluey substance, and being thrown into boiling water, swims upon it, and becomes a kind of green wax, not so fat and more friable than bees-wax, but equally fit for burning. The only inconvenience attending it is that it is very brittle; but it may be mixed with another wax extremely liquid, gathered in the woods of the American islands, which, however, is not necessary, unless it is intended to be made into tapers. I have seen candles of it which gave as clear a light and lasted as long as ours. Our missionaries in the neighbourhood of Acadia mix it with tallow, which makes them liable to run; because the tallow does not incorporate well with the wax. The Sieur Alexander<sup>8</sup> who is here, in the company's service, in quality of surgeon and botanist, uses it without any mixture, and his candles have not this defect, their light being soft and very clear, and the smoke, which they yield, has the very agreeable smell of the myrtle. He even entertains hopes of making them perfectly white, and shewed me a piece which was more than half so.<sup>9</sup> He pretends, that had he five or six of those slaves which are unfit for ordinary labour, he could [<sup>1308</sup>] gather a quantity of the grains in a season, sufficient to yield a quantity of wax, enough to load a vessel.

Thirteen or fourteen leagues from Biloxi, towards the east, you find the river Mobile, which runs from north to south, and the mouth of which is opposite to the island

<sup>7</sup>This is one form of the bayberry, called the wax myrtle (*Myrica caroliniana*).

<sup>8</sup>Very little is known of this French surgeon Alexandre. His term of service in the New World was brief.

<sup>9</sup>This project has been since given over, because they say this wax, by being whitened, undergoes considerable alteration. — CHARLEVOIX.

Dauphine.

Dauphine. It takes its rise in the country of the Chichas, its course being about an hundred and thirty leagues.<sup>10</sup> Its channel is very narrow and extremely winding, which, however, does not prevent its being very rapid: but no vessels, excepting small pirogues, can get up it, when the waters are low. We have a fort upon this river, which has been a long time the principal post of the colony;<sup>11</sup> the soil, however, is not good, but there is an opportunity of carrying on a trade with the Spaniards, which was then our only object in view.

It is affirmed, that some leagues beyond this fort, a quarry has been discovered: if this discovery is real, and the quarry is large, it may prevent the entire desertion of this post, which several inhabitants had begun to leave, not caring to cultivate a soil, which would not answer the expences they were at. I do not, however, believe that we shall ever evacuate the fort of Mobile, were it only to preserve our alliance with the Tchactas, a numerous nation which forms a necessary barrier against the Chicachas and the other Indians bordering on Carolina. Garcilasso de la Vega, in his history of Florida, makes mention of a village called *Mavilla*, which has without doubt given its name to the river and the nation settled upon its banks. The Mauvilians were then very powerful, but there are hardly any traces of them now remaining.

[309] Our people are at present employed in seeking a proper place for a settlement, to the westward of the Mississippi, and it is believed, that a place is found about a

<sup>10</sup> Mobile River is formed by the union of the Tombigbee and Alabama rivers. Charlevoix evidently considers the former as the main stream, and gives it the name Mobile from its source to Mobile Bay.

<sup>11</sup> The first fort on Mobile Bay was built in 1702 on Twenty-seven Mile Bluff and named Louis in honor of the King. In 1710 Fort Louis was removed to the site of the present city of Mobile when a town was laid out around the post.



hundred leagues from the mouth of the river, in a bay, which sometimes bears the name of St. Magdalen, sometimes that of St. Lewis; but most commonly that of St. Bernard. It receives into it several pretty large rivers, and it was here that M. de la Sale first made land, when he missed the mouth of the Mississippi. A brigantine has been some time ago sent to make a survey of it, but they met with Indians who seemed little disposed to receive us, and who were not treated in such a manner as to gain their affections. I have just now heard, that the Spaniards have been beforehand with us.<sup>12</sup>

There is in reality somewhat more pressing, and of greater consequence, than this undertaking. I am sensible, that commerce is the soul of colonies, and that they are only useful to such a kingdom as ours by that means, and in order to prevent our neighbours from becoming too powerful; but if the cultivation of lands is not first attended to, trade, after enriching a few private persons, will soon fall to nothing, and the colony never be well settled. The neighbourhood of the Spaniards may have its advantages; but, let us suffer them to draw as near as they think fit, we are not in a condition, and we have no occasion, to extend our settlements farther. They are sufficiently peaceable in this country, and they never will be strong enough to give us any disturbance: it is not even their interest to drive us from hence; and if they are not as yet sensible, they will soon be so, that they cannot have a better barrier against the English than Louisiana.

[310] The heats were very troublesome at Biloxi, from the middle of March; and, I imagine, when once the sun

<sup>12</sup> The present Matagorda Bay, Texas. The site of La Salle's colony was near Lavaca Bay, an arm of Matagorda Bay, on the Garcitas River. See *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, II, 166-182. On the later French expedition to Texas see H. E. Bolton, *The Spanish Borderlands*, Chronicles of America Series XXIII (New York, 1921), 226-227.



has taken effect upon the sand, the heat will become excessive. It is indeed said, that were it not for the breeze which springs up pretty regularly between nine and ten every morning, and continues till sun-set, it would not be possible to live here. The mouth of the Mississippi lies in twenty-nine degrees of latitude, and the coast of Biloxi in thirty.<sup>13</sup> In the month of February, we had some piercing cold weather, when the wind was at north and north-west, but it did not last: they were sometimes followed by pretty sharp heats, accompanied with storms and thunder, so that in the morning we had winter, in the afternoon summer, with some small intervals of spring and harvest betwixt the two. The breeze blows commonly from the east: when it comes from the south, it is only a reflected wind, and not near so refreshing; but it is still a wind, and when that is entirely wanting, there is hardly any such thing as breathing.

On the 24th of March, I set out from Biloxi, where I had been stopt above a month, by being taken ill of the jaundice, and took the route of New Orleans, where I was to embark in a vessel belonging to the company, called the *Adour*. I made this voyage in a pirogue and never made a more disagreeable one. The west wind, which in three hours time had carried me five leagues from Biloxi, gave place to a south wind so very violent, that I was obliged to halt. I had scarce time to set up my tent, when a dreadful shower of rain, accompanied with thunder, laid us all under water.

[311] Two small vessels, which set out at the same time with me, took advantage of this wind which carried them a good way in a few hours, and I regretted very much my not doing the same: but I soon learned that their fate was

<sup>13</sup> Biloxi is about 30 degrees and 15 minutes north latitude.

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rather to be pitied than envied; the first was in continual danger of shipwreck, and the people on board arrived at New Orleans rather dead than alive. The second sailed half-way, and five of the passengers were drowned in a meadow, which the tempest had converted into a swamp. The wind continued the whole night with the same violence, and the rain did not cease till next day at noon. It began again in the evening, and lasted till day-light, accompanied with thunder.

When you range along within sight of this coast, it seems to be very agreeable, but on approaching nearer, it appears to be quite another thing. It is all a sandy bottom as at Biloxi, and nothing but a bad sort of wood is found upon it. I have observed here a sort of sorrel, which has the same taste with ours, but its leaves are narrower, and occasion, as is said, the bloody-flux. There is likewise in these places a sort of ash, called *bois d'Amourette*; and its bark, which is full of prickles, is reckoned a speedy and sovereign remedy against the tooth-ach.

On the 26th, it rained the whole day, and though the sea was calm, we made but little progress. We advanced somewhat farther on the twenty-seventh; but on the following night lost our way off the island of Pearls.<sup>14</sup> The next day we encamped at the entrance of lake Pontchartrain,<sup>15</sup> having a little before left upon our right the river of pearls, which has three mouths. These three <sup>[312]</sup> branches separate, about four leagues from the sea, a little above Biloxi.

In the afternoon, we passed lake Pontchartrain, which is seven or eight leagues over; and at midnight entered

<sup>14</sup>Probably the present Grand Island at the entrance to Lake Borgne.

<sup>15</sup>They camped at the entrance to Lake Pontchartrain after the passage of the Riglets or channel between Lakes Borgne and Pontchartrain.

*Bayouc St. Jean.* Those who have sailed the first upon this lake found it, as they said, so full of alligators, that they could hardly make a stroke with an oar without touching one of them. They are at present very scarce, and we saw only some marks of them at our encampment; for these animals lay their eggs upon land. After reposing myself a little, at leaving the lake, I pursued my journey by land, and arrived before day at New Orleans.

The Adour was no longer there, but was at no great distance, and I went on board the next day, being the first of April. The inundation was now at its height, and, consequently, the river much more rapid than I had found it the month before. Besides, a ship, especially a flute or pink, is not so easily wrought as a coaster; and, as our crew were not accustomed to this navigation, we had a good deal of difficulty in getting out of the river. The ship being driven sometimes on one side, sometimes on the other, her yards and rigging frequently got foul of trees, and we were oftener than once obliged to cut the latter, in order to get clear.

It was still much worse, when we got the length of the channels; for the currents drove us always upon the first with extreme violence. We were even involved in one of the smallest, and I know not to this day how we got rid of it. We were, however, quit for an anchor which we left there; <sup>[313]</sup> having already lost one two days before, so that we had only two remaining. So discouraging a circumstance gave us some serious thoughts, but the youth and little experience of those, to whose management we were entrusted, occasioned us still greater uneasiness.

The Adour is a very fine vessel, three hundred tons burthen, and left France extremely well manned, under the direction of a captain well acquainted with his business,

ness, and a lieutenant who had an exceeding good character. The latter was left sick at St. Domingo, and the captain, having had a difference with one of the directors of the company, was by him turned out of his employment. In order to fill up the room of these two principal officers, they pitched upon a young Maloin, who had come three years before to Louisiana, in quality of a pilot or pilot's apprentice, and had in that time got the command of a coaster in the road of Biloxi, employed in carrying provisions, sometimes to the Mobile, and sometimes to New Orleans. He seems to have every thing requisite for forming an expert seaman; he loves and applies himself to his business; but we should be very well pleased not to be obliged to see his apprenticeship, especially in a navigation attended with so many difficulties.

He has for second, under him, an officer who came from France in quality of an ensign, who is still a young man, and very proper to be a subaltern under experienced chiefs, who should leave him nothing but the care of executing their orders. It would be no easy matter to find a hardier seaman in stormy weather, which he has braved from his infancy in the Newfoundland fisheries; and two or three ship-wrecks, from which he has happily extricated himself, have inspired him with such a confidence, that I should be much surprized if in the end he does not come badly off.

Our first pilot seems to be a little riper than these two officers, and great stress is laid upon his knowledge of the gulph of Florida, which he has already once passed through. This, however, is but little for an acquaintance with the most dangerous passage in the American seas, where shipwrecks happen by thousands. Besides, I am afraid, that an air of self sufficiency I perceive in him,  
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may produce some fatal consequences. He has two subalterns who are good men; and we have fifty sailors of Bretagne, a little mutinous, indeed, but strong and vigorous, most of them having been at the cod-fishery, which is a good school: their marine officers seem to me to be men of sense and execution.

In the meantime, notwithstanding all the delays I have spoken of, we anchored on the second in the evening, within-side of the bar; we passed it on the third, but for want of wind could get no farther. Yesterday we were stopped the whole day, and this night we had a gale of wind at south, which made us thankful we were not at sea so near the shore. I hope, Madam, to write you in a short time from St. Domingo, at which place our vessel is to take in a cargo of sugar, which lies ready for her. I take the opportunity of a coaster going up to New Orleans, to send you this letter by a vessel which is bound directly to France.

*I am, &c.*



## LETTER THIRTY-FOURTH.

*Voyage to the Gulf of Bahama. Shipwreck of the Adour. Return to Louisiana, along the Coast of Florida. Description of that Coast.*

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BILOXI, June 5, 1722.

MADAM,

I PROMISED to write to you shortly from St. Domingo. Behold me, after two months have passed, as far from it as I then was. The account of the sad adventure, which has brought me back to this colony, and which has but too truly fulfilled what I foresaw, with a few observations on a country which I had thoughts of visiting, will form the substance of this letter. I am not, however, in other respects so much to be pitied as you may imagine. I am fully recovered of my fatigues; I have run great hazards, but have been happily delivered from them: the past misfortune is like a dream, and often like a very agreeable one.

About half an hour at most, before I had closed my last, the wind coming about to the <sup>[316]</sup> North-West, we made sail. I should have thought the sanctity of the festival, which was that of Easter-day, would have prevailed with the captain to delay our departure till next day, especially as it was now afternoon. But as we were pretty  
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short of provisions, a day's delay might be attended with disagreeable consequences. We soon lost sight of land, and after sailing about an hour, after enjoying the curious sight of the mixture of the waters of the sea and of the Mississippi, but so as to be still distinguishable, we at last found ourselves got to pure salt water.

I may possibly be told, that we had quitted the right channel, and I will allow this might be the case. But the fight or struggle we observed so near the shore, is no sign that the river gets the better to such a degree as to force itself a passage, and for twenty leagues in the open sea, to give laws to the ocean itself. Besides, were this fact true, at least in the time of the great land floods, in the place where we then were, how could men be at such a loss to find out the mouth of the river? The difference in the colour of its waters would have, sufficiently, guided the most inattentive.

With regard to this colour, I have told you that the Mississippi, after its junction with the Missouri, takes the colour of the waters of this river, which is white: but would you believe it, of all the sorts of water which are made use of in long voyages, there is none which keeps so long as this! Besides it is excellent drinking after having been left to settle in jars, at the bottom of which is found a kind of white tartar, which in all appearance serves both to give it its colour, and to purify and preserve it.

[317] On the twelfth at noon, after having suffered by extreme heats for several days, and which were still more intolerable in the night than in the day time, we discovered *Cape de Sed* on the North shore of the island of Cuba, and very high land.<sup>1</sup> At sun set we were east of it, kept the Cape on our eastern quarter, and so sailed along in

<sup>1</sup> Probably one of the headlands at the entrance of Bahía Honda.

sight of the shore. On the morrow at day-break we were abreast of the Havanna. This city is eighteen leagues from Cape Sed; and half way to it, you discover a pretty high mountain, the summit of which is a kind of platform: they call it *la table à Marianne*, Marianne's table.<sup>2</sup>

Two leagues beyond the Havanna, there is a small fort on the coast which bears the name of *la Hogue*, and from which you first discover *le Pain*, or loaf of *Matanzas*.<sup>3</sup> This is a mountain, the summit of which is shaped like an oven, or if you will a loaf. This serves to distinguish the Bay of Matanzas, which is fourteen leagues from the Havanna. The heat continued to encrease, for we were now on the limits or frontiers of the Torrid Zone. Besides, we had scarce a breath of wind, and advanced only by favour of the current, which bore us to the eastward.

On the fourteenth, towards six in the evening, we saw from the top-mast head, the land of Florida. There is no prudent navigator who happens to have this prospect, without six or seven hours daylight at least, but who tacks about and stands out to the sea till morning; there being no sea in the whole ocean where there is a greater necessity of a clear prospect, because of the various currents, with which we can never, with reason, believe ourselves sufficiently acquainted. We have a <sup>[318]</sup> recent enough example in the Spanish Galleons, which were lost here some years ago, for having neglected the precaution I have just now mentioned. The Chevalier d'Here, captain of a ship who accompanied them, did his utmost to prevail with the general of the Flota to wait for the day before he entered the Gulf: he could not prevail, and did not think proper to throw himself headlong with him over this precipice.

<sup>2</sup> A high plateau seen from Mariel Bay.

<sup>3</sup> A lofty peak back of the present Matanzas Bay.

Our captain, who had very good advice given him on this head, was fully resolved to profit by it; but too much easiness, on his side, was attended with the same consequences as the presumption of the Spanish general had been. His first pilot, who imagined himself one of the most expert men in the world, and his lieutenant, who did not know what it was to doubt of any thing, were of opinion to continue their course, and the captain had not courage to oppose them. He advised, indeed, to steer at least north east, and the sequel shewed, that if his opinion had been followed, we should have escaped being shipwrecked. But he could only obtain a north-north-east course; the pilot assuring him that the currents set with impetuosity to the eastward, which was indeed true near the lands on the other side, but they set to the westward on that on which we were.

At seven o'clock, the land still appeared at a good distance, and we could not see it at first from the tops; half an hour after, one of the sailors, by means of the flashes of lightening, observed that the water had changed its colour. He took notice of it, but his information was received with derision, and he was told that was only the lightening which made the water look white. He still <sup>[319]</sup> persisted, and many of his companions soon came into his opinion: the officers would still have laughed at them, but they were in such numbers, and made such a noise, that at last the captain ordered soundings to be tried.

Six fathoms of water only were found; the only safe part we could then have taken, was to cast anchor immediately, but there were none in readiness. It was proposed to wear the ship, and perhaps it was still time, had expedition been used; but they amused themselves with sounding again, when no more than five fathoms were found.

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The lead was cast a third time, and then there were only three. Conceive to yourself, Madam, a parcel of children, who saw themselves hurried on to a precipice, and had all their attention employed about discovering its depth, without taking any measures to avoid it: such was precisely our case.

Immediately a confused noise arose, every one crying with all his might, so that the officers could not make themselves heard, and two or three minutes after the vessel struck: that instant a storm arose, followed by rain which laid the wind, but it soon sprung up again at south, and blew harder than before. The ship immediately began to stick fast by the rudder, and there was great reason to fear that the mainmast, which at every stroke sprung up to a good height, should beat out a hole in her bottom; therefore it was immediately condemned in form, and cut away, the captain according to custom, giving it the first stroke with a hatchet.

The lieutenant upon this went on board the shallop, in order to discover in what place we <sup>[320]</sup> were, and what condition the ship was in. He found that there was only four feet water ahead, that the bank on which we had struck was so small, that there was just a place for the vessel, and all around it she would have been a-float. But had we escaped this bank, we must have fallen upon another, for it was surrounded by them, and certainly we could not have met with one that was more convenient.

The wind still blew with violence, and the vessel continued to strike, and at every stroke we expected she would have gone to pieces. All the effects of terror were painted on every face, and after the first tumult formed by the cries of the sailors who were working, and the groans of the passengers, who laid their account with perishing



ishing every moment, was over, a dead and profound silence reigned throughout the whole vessel. We have since learnt that some few had secretly taken their measures not to be surprised in case the vessel should fall to pieces: not only the shallop, but the canoe were launched and in readiness, and some trusty sailors had warning given them to hold themselves prepared for the first signal. I was afterwards told, that they had resolved not to leave me behind.

What is certain, is, I passed the night without closing my eyes, and in the situation of a man who never expects to see daylight again. It however appeared, and shewed us the land about two leagues from us, but it was not the same which we had at first seen, and which we still perceived, tho' at a great distance, but a low land which did not seem at first to be inhabited. This sight, however, did not fail to give us pleasure, and somewhat to revive our spirits.

[321] We then examined if there was any probability of getting the Adour a-float again, and as it was prudent to have more resources than one, we at the same time considered of the means of extricating ourselves from our present uncomfortable situation, on the supposition it was impossible to recover the vessel. We then called to mind that we had a flat-bottomed boat on board, which was intended to be made use of in loading the sugars at St. Domingo. This was a very wise precaution taken by the captain, who had been informed that vessels were frequently detained longer in the road on that account, than was consistent with the interest of the owners, or the health of the crews; but providence had without doubt another view, when it inspired him with this thought. This boat was the instrument of our safety.

I do not know what passed this day between the officers and the pilot, but there was no more talk of getting off  
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the vessel. Many have pretended that all endeavours for that purpose would have been in vain; but the captain has more than once complained to me that they would not suffer him to make the attempts as he wished to do. It was therefore resolved to carry all the people ashore this same day, and they were at work the whole morning in building a raft, that they might not be obliged to make several trips.

It was not, however, thought proper to abandon the ship as yet; and the passengers only were embarked in the shallop and on the raft. At the distance of a cannon shot from the ship we found the sea ran very high, and the biscuit we carried with us was damaged by the water; a small pirogue <sup>[322]</sup> which followed the shallop, had a good deal of difficulty to live; and the raft which carried two and twenty men, was driven so far out by the current, that we believed her lost.

The shallop in which I was, made all possible haste ashore, in order to go afterwards to the assistance of the rest; but just as we were ready to land, we perceived a large company of Indians armed with bows and arrows coming down to the sea side. This sight made us reflect that we had no arms; and we stopt some time, not daring to advance. We even imagined, every thing considered, it would be imprudent to go any further. The Indians perceived our embarrassment, and easily understood the cause. They drew near us, calling out in Spanish, that they were friends. But seeing that this did not encourage us, they laid down their arms and came towards us, having the water up to their middle.

We were soon surrounded by them, and it is certain that encumbered as we were with baggage, in a boat where we could hardly turn ourselves about; it would  
have

have been easy for them to have destroyed us. They asked us first if we were Englishmen, we answered that we were not, but good friends and allies to the Spaniards; at which they testified a great deal of joy, inviting us to come ashore on their island, and assuring us that we should be as safe there as aboard our own vessel. Distrust, on certain occasions, shews only weakness, and besides gives rise to dangerous suspicions. We therefore thought we ought to accept the invitation of these barbarians; so we followed them to their island, which we found to be one of the *Martyrs*.<sup>4</sup>

[<sup>323</sup>] What was pleasant is, that we were determined to take this resolution by the arrival of the pirogue, in which there were only four or five men, when we were parlying with the Indians: we certainly ran a great risque in delivering ourselves into their hands without arms, and we were afterwards sensible of it: four or five men more could not have made them alter their designs, supposing they had been bad towards us; and I never reflect on the confidence which so slender a reinforcement inspired us with, but it brings into my mind, those persons who are afraid to be by themselves in the dark, but are at once encouraged by the presence of a child, by its diverting their imagination, which is the only cause of their fear.

We were no sooner landed on the island, than little satisfied as we were with respect to the Indians, we also fell into a distrust of our officers. The captain of the Adour had attended us thus far, but as soon as he had set us on shore, he took leave of us, saying that he was obliged to return on board, where he had still a great many things to do, and that he would immediately send us whatever we

<sup>4</sup>The Florida Keys were in 1513 named the Martyrs Islands by Ponce de Léon, because at a distance they looked "like men who are suffering."

stood

stood in need of, especially arms. There was nothing in this but what was reasonable, and we easily conceived that his presence might be necessary aboard the vessel; but we reflected that he had only taken the passengers out of her, and that upon his return, the whole crew would be all together on board.

This made us suspect that the boat of which I have spoken, was only a lure to amuse us, and that they had put us ashore, as being an encumbrance to them, in order to be able to make use of the shallop and canoe, to transport themselves to the <sup>[324]</sup> Havannah or St. Augustine in Florida.<sup>5</sup> These suspicions were strengthened in every one of us, when we perceived that we were all in the same way of thinking, and this agreement made us imagine it was not without foundation; it was therefore resolved amongst ourselves, that I should return to the vessel with the captain, in order to prevent such a violent resolution, should they attempt it, from taking effect.

I therefore declared to the captain, that as his chaplain was to remain on the island, it was not proper I should stay likewise; that it would be better to separate us, and that I was resolved to sleep no where but aboard, whilst any one remained in the ship. He seemed a little surprized at what I said, but made no opposition, and so set out. I found on getting aboard, that they had set the sails, to try as they said, to get her off; but a great many other things were to be done for that purpose, which however they did not think proper to attempt.

Half an hour after, the wind turned to the east and blew very hard, which obliged us to furl the sails; this gale, however, was the safety of those who were on the

<sup>5</sup> St. Augustine, the Spanish capital of East Florida, was built in 1565 by an expedition under the leadership of Pedro Menéndez de Avilés.



raft, which had been carried out very far in the offing. The waves drove her back towards us, and as soon as we perceived her, the captain sent the shallop, which took her in tow, and brought her along side. These unhappy men, were for the most part, poor passengers who looked for nothing but death; and we on our side, began to despair of being able to save them, when providence raised this little tempest in order to preserve them from shipwreck.

[325] My presence was more necessary on board than I thought it would have been. Our sailors, during the captain's absence, had thought fit to drown the sense of their misfortunes in wine: in spite of the lieutenant, whom they did not much regard, and whom several did not love, they had broken open the captain's case of liquors, and had got almost all of them dead drunk. I, besides, perceived in the crew, some seeds of dissention from which I imagined every thing was to be apprehended, if not remedied in time; and the more so as the captain, tho' well enough liked by the sailors, could not make himself obeyed by his officers, most of whom were disposed to mutiny, and could not endure his lieutenant.

To increase our perplexity, a number of the Indians had followed close after us, and we perceived if we had nothing to fear from their violence, it would not be easy to get rid of their importunities, especially as it behoved us to be very watchful over them, to prevent their stealing. He that seemed the principal man, called himself Don Antonio, and spoke indifferent good Spanish. He had been more successful in imitating the gravity and manners of the Spaniards. Whenever he saw any one tolerably dressed, he asked if he was a *Cavallero*, having before told us that he was one himself and one of the greatest distinction in  
his



his nation. His dispositions, however, were not much of the gentleman; every thing that he saw he coveted, and if he had not been prevented, he and his people would have left us nothing they could have carried away. He asked me for my girdle, I told him I had occasion for it, and could not part with it; notwithstanding which, he continued to demand it with great earnestness.

[326] We learned from this man, that almost all the Indians of this village had been baptized at the Havannah, to which they made a voyage every year. This city lies at the distance of forty-five leagues, and they make this passage in small very flat pirogues, in which we should hardly trust ourselves across the Seine at Paris. Don Antonio, added they, had a king called Don Diego, whom we should see to-morrow. He afterwards asked us what route we had resolved to take, and offered to conduct us to St. Augustine. We thanked him for his offer, treated him and all his company handsomely, who returned to all appearance very well satisfied with their reception.

These Indians have a redder skin than any of those I have yet seen: we could not learn the name of their nation: tho' they deserve no good character, yet they do not seem to be so bad as the *Calos* or *Carlos*,<sup>6</sup> so infamous for their cruelty, whose country lies at no great distance from the Martyrs; I do not believe they are Canibals, but perhaps they appeared so tractable to us only because we were stronger than them. I do not know what has embroiled them with the English, but we had great reason to think that they did not love them. Perhaps Don Antonio had no other motive for his visit, but to examine if we

<sup>6</sup>The Calusa Indians, known to the French as the Calos or Carlos, were a powerful tribe of southwest Florida, first met in 1513 by the Spanish. They also inhabited some of the Keys; in 1763 they massacred the shipwrecked crew of a French vessel. Ultimately they were removed to the neighborhood of Havana.

were of that nation, or if they should not run too great a hazard in attacking us.

On the sixteenth I went ashore to those left on the island, and fulfilled the promise we had made them the evening before. I spent almost the whole day with them, and in the evening at my return, found the whole vessel in confusion. The authors of this disorder were the marine officers, and all <sup>[327]</sup> the best sailors in the ship had taken their side. Their quarrel was with the lieutenant, who, they said, had hitherto treated them with a great deal of haughtiness and severity. The wine, which they had at discretion, had inflamed their passions in such a manner, that it was scarce possible to make them listen to reason.

The captain shewed on this occasion a wisdom, firmness, and moderation, which could not well have been expected from his age, little experience and past conduct: he knew how to make himself loved and feared by people who seemed to be guided by nothing but fury and caprice. The lieutenant on his part confounded the most mutinous by his intrepidity, and having found means to separate and employ them, in the end made himself obeyed. They had at last drawn from the bottom of the hold the boat that had been so long promised, and had carried it to the island. This must now be equipped, lodgings must be found till it could be got ready, provisions and ammunition must be got from the ship, and lastly, they must fortify themselves against any surprize of the Indians. The captain employed in this service all such as he had most need to make sure of, and begged of me to remain on board to assist the lieutenant in restraining the rest within bounds.

On the twenty-seventh at day-break there appeared a sail within two large leagues of us; we hung out the signal  
of

of distress, and some time afterwards we observed that he had laid his ship to, to wait for us. The lieutenant immediately embarked on board a canoe, and went on board to see whether the captain would agree to receive all of us. But this was only a <sup>[328]</sup> brigantine of an hundred tons, that had been plundered by pirates, and which had for three days past done their utmost to get out of this bay, into which the currents, stronger this year than they had ever been known, had carried them in spite of all their efforts, and tho' the wind was at east north east. 'Tis true, we did not come to know this but by the account of the officer, who was by some imagined to have invented this story in order to lay to the charge of the irregularity of the current, the misfortune into which his own obstinacy had hurried us.

Be this as it will, the English master consented to embark twenty of our people, provided he was supplied with provisions and water, of which he stood in extreme want. The condition was accepted, and he accordingly drew near to cast anchor as close to us as possible. But a strong south-west wind arising, he was obliged to continue his course, lest by endeavouring to assist us he should expose himself to ship-wreck.

On the twenty-ninth we had sight of three vessels more, and sent to make them the same proposals we had formerly done, but without effect. They were English too, and complained they had been plundered by pirates.

This very day, as there remained nothing on board the *Adour* which we could carry away with us, we bid her the last farewell; and with still more regret, as for the four days since she had been wrecked she had not made one drop of water, and we all went on shore after sun-set. Here we found tents, which had been made with the sails  
of

of <sup>[329]</sup> the ship, a strong guard-room, where centinels were kept day and night, with provisions disposed in the best manner in the magazine, where also a guard was kept.

The island, on which we were, was in appearance about four leagues round; there were others near it of different extent, and that on which the Indians had their tents was the smallest of all and the nearest to ours. Here they lived solely by fishing, and this whole coast was as plentifully stocked in that, as the land was destitute of every article for the support of human life. As to their dress, a few leaves of trees, or a piece of bark was sufficient for them. They cover no part of their bodies but the part which all men from modesty conceal.

The soil of all these islands is a sort of very fine sand, or rather a sort of calcined chalk, interspersed with white coral, which is easily broken. Thus you see nothing on it but shrubs and bushes. The banks of the sea are covered with a pretty sort of shells, and some sponges are likewise found on them, which seem to have been cast on shore here by the waves in stormy weather. 'Tis pretended that what keeps the Indians from leaving this place, is the number of shipwrecks that happen in the mouth of the gulph of Bahama, of which they never fail to make all the advantage possible.

There is not so much as a single fourfooted beast on these islands, which seem to have been cursed of God and man, and which would be utterly uninhabited, except by a set of wretches, who subsist on the destruction and miseries of others, and by compleating what their ill destiny only begun.

<sup>[330]</sup> On the twentieth, Don Diego paid us a visit. He is a young man of a stature somewhat under the middle size, and with a very sorry presence. He is very near as  
naked



naked as his subjects, and the few rags on his back were hardly worth picking up at one's feet. He wore on his head a sort of fillet, made of I know not what sort of stuff, and which some travellers would not have failed to call a diadem. He was without attendance, or any mark of distinction or dignity, or in short any thing to signify what a personage he was. A young pretty handsome woman, and decently clothed for an Indian, accompanied him, and was, we were told, the queen his wife.

We received their majesties of Florida, in a cavalierlike manner enough; we made a sort of amity with them however, and they seemed well enough satisfied with us; but we could see none of these Caciques, whose power and wealth are so much vaunted by the historian of Florida. We said a word or two to Don Diego concerning the offer, which Don Antonio had made us, of carrying us to St. Augustine, and he gave us to hope for all the services that lay in his power. In order to induce him the more to perform his promise, I made him a present of one of my shirts, which he received very thankfully.

He returned next day, having my shirt above his own tatters, and it trailed upon the ground. He gave us to understand, that he was not properly the sovereign of his nation, but held of a Cacique<sup>7</sup> at some distance. He is, notwithstanding, absolute in his own village, of which he lately gave us a convincing proof. Don Antonio, who seemed at least double his age, and who would have easily beaten <sup>[331]</sup> one double his strength, came to visit us a short while after, and told us, that Don Diego had drubbed him twice very heartily, for getting drunk on board the *Adour*, where probably some remainder of spirituous liquors had been left. The most sensible difference

<sup>7</sup>Cacique is the Spanish name for a head chief.



to be found between the Indians of Canada, and those of Florida, is this dependence on their chiefs, and the respect they shew them. Thus we see not in them as in the former those elevated sentiments, and that haughtiness which is the effect of their independance, and which is supplied in policied states by these principles of religion and honour, which are instilled into the mind by education in their early and tender years.

On the twenty-second, Don Diego came frankly, and without staying for any invitation to dine with us, clothed as on the preceding day. He seemed delighted with this dress, which gave him however a very ridiculous air, and which, joined to the badness of his physiognomy, made him exactly resemble a man going to pay an *amende honorable*, that is, suffer some scandalous punishment. Whether from religion or natural reluctance, we could never prevail with him to eat any flesh; we had still some fish left, which he himself had sent us the evening before: he eat of this, and drank pure water.

After the repast we were willing to speak about business; but he told us at once, that after having maturely considered the proposal we had made him, he could neither spare us Don Antonio nor any other of his people for guides to conduct us to St. Augustine, as there were numerous nations on the way we must of necessity take, with whom he was actually at war. I do not know whether we <sup>[332]</sup> now did not seriously repent of having on such slight grounds abandoned the Adour; for after Don Diego left us, the canoe was sent to her, but those who visited her reported, that the Indians had entirely demolished her, and that she was filling full of water.

On the twenty-third, the boat was finished, and we began to think in good earnest of coming to some final resolution.

resolution. Two ways offered, on which the opinions were divided; the first were for risking the passage to the Havannah, and the others for pursuing the coast to St. Augustine. The last seemed to be the safest, as the first was the shortest. But had this been solid, it ought to have been resolved upon the day after we were cast away, or rather we ought to have sent our long-boat to inform the governor of our situation, and pray him to send us a brigantine. The rigging only of the Adour, would have been sufficient to have indemnified him for his expences.

Be this as it will, the greatest part of our company were for this last resolution; and it was impossible for me to bring them to any other. They were forty in number, they demanded the long-boat and canoe, and we were obliged to comply. The captain of the Adour was of this number. Had it not been for this reason, I should have thought myself obliged in duty to accompany them; but there was a necessity of dividing their spiritual assistance, as well as the victuals and other stores. On the morrow after mess, the chaplain, who was a Dominican, would have me to bless the three vessels; I obeyed, and baptized the boat, to which I gave the name of the *Saint Saviour*. In the evening after prayers, I made one last effort to bring <sup>[333]</sup> the whole company to an unanimous way of thinking; I easily obtained that they should all set out together next day, and encamp in the island which was farthest in the offing, and take our resolution as the wind favoured.

We set out in effect on the twenty-fifth at noon, and sailed together for several leagues; but towards sun-set we saw the long-boat thread the channel, which must be crossed to get to the Havannah, without ever considering the canoe, whose provisions they had on board, and who not being in condition to follow them, was obliged to join

us:

us: we received them kindly, altho' there was one among them with whom we had no reason to be satisfied. We landed on the island, where we intended to rendezvous, and where a body of Indians had already landed, with what design we knew not: we kept on our guard all night, and set out early in the morning.

The weather was delightful, the sea calm and pleasant, and our crew began to envy the lot of the long-boat. They even began to murmur very soon, and our chiefs thought it prudent to seem desirous of satisfying them. We therefore took the course of the channel. Two hours afterwards the wind blew fresher, and we thought we discovered the appearances of an approaching storm. There was nobody then who did not agree, that it would be a rash thing to hazard so long a passage in such vessels as ours, nothing being weaker than our boat, which made water every where. But as in order to go to St. Augustine, we should have been under a necessity of sailing back again the whole way we had come hitherto, we came to an unanimous resolution to return by the way of Biloxi.

[334] We therefore made sail westward, but could advance no great way that day, and were obliged to pass the whole night in the boat, where there was far from room sufficient for all of us to lie at our whole length. On the twenty-seventh we encamped in an island where we found the cabins abandoned, the roads beaten, and the traces of Spanish shoes. This island is the first of those called the *Tortuës*;<sup>8</sup> the soil is the same with that of the *isles aux Martyrs*. I cannot conceive what men can have to do in so wretched places, and so remote from all manner of habitations. We continued to sail westward, and advanced with a rapidity which could only come from the currents.

<sup>8</sup>Now known as the Dry Tortugas.

We advanced likewise considerably on the twenty-eighth till noon; altho' we had very little wind, the islands seemed to ride past us. At noon we took an observation of the latitude, and found ourselves in twenty-four degrees, fifteen minutes north. Had our sea charts been correct we should have been at the western extremity of the *Tortuës*. It was pretty hazardous to trust ourselves in the open sea, and had I had the management, we had left all these islands on our larboard side; but our conductors were afraid of missing the passage between them and the continent. They had all reason to repent it, for we were afterwards two whole days without seeing land, tho' we sailed always north or north-east.

Then despair seized our crew, and a single squall of wind, such as we had often experienced, could have sent us to the bottom. Even a calm was attended with inconveniences, as we were obliged to row all night, and the heat was excessive. The sailors had reason to be dissatisfied, the obstinacy of <sup>[335]</sup> a few men having exposed us to the great hazard we were in; but the evil was already done, so that we wanted something different from murmuring to set us to rights. Since our departure to Louisiana, I could never prevail with most of them to approach the sacraments, and very few of them had fulfilled the paschal duties. I profited of this occasion to prevail with the whole of them to promise to confess themselves, and to communicate as soon as we should come on shore. They had scarce promised this, when the land appeared.

We made strait towards it, and arrived before noon. On the twenty-fourth at noon, we were in twenty-six degrees, fifty-six minutes. We had still the view of the mainland, without being able to approach it, it being skirted with peninsulas and islands, mostly very flat, barren, and  
between



between them scarce a passage for a canoe or bark. What we suffered most from was the want of water, there being none upon them. The following days we were often stopt by contrary winds, but found shelter every where, and sometimes a little hunting and fishing. Water was the only thing we could not find; I made use of this delay to bring the whole company to fulfil their promise, to approach the sacraments.

It appears there are but few Indians in this whole country, only we saw one day four of them who came out towards us in a pirogue: we waited for them, but when they discovered us, they were afraid to come any farther, and made what haste they could back to the shore. On the tenth, we were obliged to retrench the allowance of spirituous liquors, which had been hitherto distributed among the crew, there remaining but little, which was <sup>[336]</sup> thought proper to reserve for some more pressing occasion; we began likewise to be very frugal and sparing of our provision, especially the biscuit, part of which was spoiled; so that we were now reduced to the pure necessary, having often for a meal but a handful of rice, which we were obliged to boil in brackish water.

This coast is the dominion of oysters, as the great bank of Newfoundland and the gulf and river of St. Lawrence are that of the cod-fishes. All these low-lands, which we sailed along as near as possible, are skirted with mangroves, to which are stuck a prodigious number of small oysters of an exquisite relish; others much larger and less delicate are found in the sea in such numbers, as to form shoals, which are at first taken for so many rocks level with the surface of the water. As we did not dare to go to any distance from shore, we often got into pretty deep bays or creeks, which we were obliged to coast quite round,



round, and which lengthened our course prodigiously. But the moment the land disappeared, our crew thought themselves wholly undone.

On the fifteenth in the morning, we met a Spanish shallop, in which were about fifteen persons. These were part of a ship's crew that had been cast away near the river St. Martin. This misfortune had befallen them about five and twenty days before, and they had but a very small shallop to contain forty-four persons, so that they were obliged to use it by turns, and consequently to make very short journies. This rencounter was to us a visible interposition of providence, for had it not been for the instructions which the Spanish captain gave us, we had never found the right course to steer, and <sup>[337]</sup> the uncertainty of what might become of us, might have prompted the mutineers amongst us to commit some act of violence, or perhaps even of despair.

The night following we were exposed to very great danger. We were all asleep in a very small island, except three or four persons who guarded the boat: One of them had lighted his pipe, and imprudently laid the match on the edge of the boat just where the arms, powder, and provisions were kept in a chest covered with a tarpaulin. He fell asleep afterwards, and whilst he was in this condition the covering of the chest took fire. The flame awaked him as well as his other companions, and had they been a moment longer, the boat must have been blown up or shattered to pieces; and I leave you to think what must have become of us, being without any thing but a canoe, which could not have contained above one sixth part of our company, without provisions, arms, or ammunition, in a sandy island, on which nothing grew but a few blades of wild grass.

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On the morrow, being the sixteenth, the canoe left us and joined the Spaniards. We had the wind contrary, and could not advance but with the lead in hand, the coast being so flat and covered with sharp flints in such manner at the distance of six leagues from it; our boat, which drew no more than two feet of water, was every moment in danger of striking her bottom out. We were still under the same apprehensions the two following days, and on the twentieth we encamped on an island, which forms the eastern point of the *Baye des Apalaches*.<sup>9</sup> All night we perceived fires on the continent, which <sup>[338]</sup> we were very near, and we had observed the same thing for some days past.

The twenty-first, we set out in a very thick fog, which being soon dispersed, we perceived the *balises* or sea marks, which the Spaniards directed us to follow. We did this by steering north, and we saw that had it not been for this assistance, it would have been impossible for us to have shunned the sand-banks, with which this whole coast is covered, and which are full of oysters. About ten o'clock we perceived a small stone-fort, of a square form, with regular bastions; we immediately hung out the white-flag, and immediately after were told in French to proceed no farther.<sup>10</sup>

We stopt, and immediately discovered a pirogue coming out to us, in which were three people. One of them was a native of Bayonne; he had been a gunner in Louisiana, and had the same employment at St. Mark. After the common questions, the gunner was of opinion, that the captain of the Adour and I only should go to speak with the governor: we went, and were very well received.

<sup>9</sup> The present Rock Island, off the east coast of Apalaches Bay, Florida.

<sup>10</sup> The fort of San Marcos was erected in 1718 by an expedition under Don José Primo de Ribera, who was sent to protect the few remaining Apalache Indians.

This governor was a simple lieutenant, but a man of good sense; he made no difficulty of letting us bring our boat opposite to the fort; invited our officers and the principal passengers to dinner; but not till he had first examined our boat, and had transported into his magazine our arms and ammunition, on his parole to deliver them when we should want to depart.

This post, which Mons. Delille<sup>11</sup> has marked in his map under the name of *Ste. Marie d'Apalache*, was never known by any other but that of St. Mark. The Spaniards formerly had a very con-<sup>[339]</sup>siderable settlement here, but which was already reduced to a very low estate, when in 1704 it was entirely destroyed by the English of Carolina, accompanied with a great number of *Alibamoû* Indians.<sup>12</sup> The Spanish garrison, consisting of thirty-two men, were made prisoners of war; but the Indians burnt seventeen of them, amongst whom were three Franciscan friars; and of seven thousand *Apalaches* which were in this canton, and who had almost all embraced the christian religion, there now remain only four hundred at St. Mark, who retired hither from the coast of the Maubile, where most of the nation now dwell.

The forests and meadows near the fort are full of buffaloes and horses, which the Spaniards suffer to run about wild, and send out Indians to catch them with nooses as they want them. These Indians are likewise Apalaches,

<sup>11</sup>Guillaume de l'Isle, a famous French cartographer of the eighteenth century, whose maps were considered very accurate. Jacques Nicolas Bellin, whose maps, as a rule, follow Charlevoix's indications, has this fort marked "St. Marc d'Apalache."

<sup>12</sup>While Spain and England were at war Governor Moore of Carolina set on foot expeditions in 1703 and again in 1704 to capture the posts of Florida. The Alibamu Indians of Muskogean stock were early met by Spanish explorers. In the first years of the eighteenth century they were visited by Carolina traders, and in 1708 came down Alabama River and attacked Fort Louis at Mobile. In 1713 Bienville built Fort Toulouse in their country, which controlled this tribe in the interests of the French. In 1763 the Alibamu removed to Louisiana, where in 1890 a few of their number were still living.

who

who had probably retired to a distance during the irruption of the English, and who came back after these were gone away. Moreover, this bay is precisely the same that Garcilasso de la Vega calls, in his history of Florida, the port of *Auté*.<sup>13</sup> The fort is built on a small eminence surrounded with marshes, and a little above the confluence of the two rivers, one of which comes from the north-east, and the other from the north-west. These are narrow and full of alligators, but for all that well stocked with fish.

Two leagues higher, on the river of the north-west, stands a village of the Apalaches, and another a league and an half from the first, within the land. This nation, formerly exceeding numerous, and which, divided into several cantons, occupied a vast extent of country, is now reduced to <sup>[340]</sup> a very low estate. They have long since embraced the christian religion; however, the Spaniards put no great confidence in them, and in so doing act very wisely: for, besides that these christians, who have been destitute of all spiritual assistance for many years, are only such in name; their conquerors at first treated them with so much severity, that they ought always to consider them as enemies not quite reconciled. It is very difficult to make good christians of people, who were begun to be converted by making christianity odious to them.

We were told at St. Mark, that a resolution had been taken to re-establish it on its former footing, and that they expected five thousand families: this is much more than the Spaniards of Florida are capable of furnishing. The country is charming, well wooded, well watered, and it is said, the more you advance up the country, the more fertile the soil. They confirmed to us in the fort, what the

<sup>13</sup>For the description of this port see F. W. Hodge, *Spanish Explorers in the Southern States*, Original Narratives Series (New York, 1907), 31-33.



Spaniards we had met with had told us, that the Indians at the Isle of Martyrs, with their king Don Diego, were a good-for-nothing sort of folks, and that if we had not kept strictly on our guard, they had certainly played us some scurvy trick. They also told us, that a Spanish brigantine had been lately cast away near the place, where we saw the four Indians in a pirogue, and that the whole crew had been impaled and eaten by those savages.

St. Mark is dependant on St. Augustine, both in a civil and military respect; as it is on the Havannah in spiritual matters. The chaplain, however, is sent by the convent of the Franciscans of St. Augustine. I met with one of them here, who was a very amiable person, and one who did us [341] considerable services: he gave us to understand that the commandant of St. Mark intended to detain us, till he should send advice of our arrival to the governor of St. Augustine, and should receive his orders. I begged of this officer, that provided he had sufficient to maintain us all the time, we might be permitted to remain with him; as what provisions we had left, were scarce enough to carry us to Louisiana. He acquitted himself extremely well of his commission, and the discourse he made, accompanied with some presents which he hinted we should offer the commandant, had all the effect we hoped for from it. This officer, even frankly, offered us the guides we asked to carry us to St. Joseph, which lies thirty leagues from St. Mark,<sup>14</sup> and to which they advertised us the course was very difficult to find. This obliged us to tarry the next day, and I was not displeased at it; as, besides that I was as well lodged in the fort as the Franciscan gov-

<sup>14</sup>In 1718, the same year that San Marcos post was built by the Spaniards, Bienville sent an expedition to St. Joseph Bay in the present Calhoun County, Florida, and built a fort named Crèveœur. It was ceded to the Spanish by the Franco-Spanish peace of 1721.



error (a distinction shewn to me alone, and which I owed to my habit), I was glad to survey the parts adjacent to the fort. There is a way over land from St. Mark to St. Augustine, the distance of which is fourscore leagues, and the road exceeding bad.

We set out the twenty-third in the morning, and on the twenty-fifth about ten o'clock, our guides made us undertake a traverse of three leagues, to get into a kind of channel formed by the continent on one side, and on the other by a series of islands of different extent. Had it not been for them, we durst never have ventured to engage in it, and so had missed the bay of St. Joseph. However, we were out of provisions, and the difficulty of finding water encreased every day. One evening that we dug ten paces from the sea on a pretty rising <sup>[342]</sup> ground, we could find nothing but brackish water, which we found impossible to drink. I bethought myself of making a hole of a small depth on the very brink of the sea, and in the sand; it was presently filled with water, as sweet and clear as if it had been drawn from the most limpid stream; but after I had drawn up one quart of it, the spring dried up entirely, from whence I concluded it was rain water that had been collected in this spot, having found the bottom very hard; and I imagine that to be very often the case.

After we had got a-head of the island, we advanced under sail till ten o'clock. Then the wind fell, but the tide, which began to ebb, supplied its place, so that we continued to make way all the night. This is the first time I observed any regular tides in the Gulf of Mexico, and our two Spaniards told us that from this place to Pensacola, the flux is twelve hours, and the reflux the same. On the morrow the twenty-sixth, a contrary wind kept us till evening in an island indifferently well wooded, ten or  
twelve

twelve leagues long, and where we killed as many larks and wood-cocks as we could desire: we also saw a great number of rattle-snakes. Our guides called it the Island of Dogs;<sup>15</sup> and from the first part of it we came to, they reckoned ten leagues to St. Mark and fifteen to St. Joseph; but they were certainly deceived with respect to this last article, there being at least twenty, and these very long.

On the twenty-seventh at eleven at night, we struck upon a bank of oysters, which were about the size of the crown of my hat, and we were about an hour in getting clear of it. We went to pass the rest of the night in a country house belonging to a <sup>[343]</sup> captain of the garrison of fort St. Joseph, called Dioniz, where at our arrival he told us strange news.

He assured us that all Louisiana was evacuated by the French; that a large vessel of that nation had appeared at the Island aux Vaisseaux, and had taken on board the governor, directors, and all the officers; that after their departure, the Indians had massacred all the rest of the inhabitants and soldiers, except a small number who had escaped on board of two coasters; that being in want of provisions, they had gone to the bay of St. Joseph; that those who came first had been well received, but that the others were not suffered to land, for fear lest so many French in one body, might be tempted to make themselves masters of that post, which we had formerly occupied.

This whole account carried so little probability in it, that I could not possibly believe it, but was so well circumstanced, and told by people who had so little interest in deceiving us, and who being at only seven leagues distance from St. Joseph, might have daily intelligence from

<sup>15</sup> Still called Dog Island, it lies at the eastern end of St. George's Sound.

thence,

thence, that it seemed hard to get over allowing it had some foundation. Most of our people were in great consternation at it; and I even felt that these general panicks touch the heart in spite of all our endeavours and understanding, and that it is impossible not to feel some fear amidst a number of persons who are seized with that passion, or to help lamenting with those who shed tears. I could by no means credit what they told me, but for all that, I had very little confidence that it was not so.

However, our crew, in spite of their despair, finding plenty of provisions, and the domestic ser-<sup>[344]</sup>vants of Don Dioniz very obliging, made good cheer all the rest of the night: next morning our guides took their leave of us, according to their orders. We had now no need of them, for besides the impossibility of losing our way to St. Joseph, we met at the house of Don Dioniz, a Frenchman who was a soldier in his company, and formerly a deserter from the Maubile, who was grown weary of the Spanish service, where he was dying of hunger, as he said, tho' he had good enough pay: we had no great difficulty to prevail with him to accompany us to St. Joseph, and from thence to Louisiana, provided he were able to obtain his discharge.

We arrived at five in the evening at St. Joseph, where we were perfectly well received by the governor. Here we met with two large shallops from Biloxi with four French officers, who had come to claim some deserters, but found them not. We had seen them on the day of Pentecoste, in a small vessel which was under sail, and went close by us. They did not probably touch at St. Joseph, and in order to conceal their being deserters, had given out the news which had alarmed us so much the evening before. Two Franciscans who officiated in the chapel of the fort, being  
informed

informed of my arrival, came to offer me a bed in their house, which I thankfully accepted.

Moreover, I do not believe there is a place in the known world, where one would think there was less likelihood of meeting with men, especially Europeans, than at St. Joseph. The situation of this bay, its shores, the soil, every thing near it, and indeed every circumstance about it, render the reasons of such a choice utterly incomprehensible. <sup>[345]</sup> A flat coast, and that quite exposed to all the winds that blow, a barren sand, a country lost and hid from all the world, and without the least commerce, and without being fit for even an *entrepôt* or repository, could not be chosen out of that jealousy, which our settling Louisiana has occasioned in the minds of the Spaniards. We had been guilty of this folly before them, but this lasted not long. There is reason to believe that they too will soon repent their choice, and that after they shall have re-established Pensacola,<sup>16</sup> they will transport thither every thing they have at St. Joseph.

The fort is not even situated in the bay, but in the bight of a crooked point in which there is an island. This fort is built only of earth, but that well lined with palisadoes, and defended with a numerous artillery.<sup>17</sup> There is also a pretty strong garrison, an *état major* compleat, and almost all the officers have their families with them. Their houses are neat and commodious, indifferently well fur-

<sup>16</sup>Pensacola was built by the Spanish in 1698 and was the capital of western Florida. In 1718 its governor was Don Juan Pedro Metamoras. Upon news of war between France and Spain, Bienville fitted out an expedition that in May, 1719, captured the post and garrison. He left his brother Chateaugué in command, when the Spaniards from Havana recaptured the place and carried its commandant to Cuba. Bienville then led a second expedition and in October retook the fort, which thus changed hands three times in the year 1719.

<sup>17</sup>This was the old Pensacola fort, which stood on the site of the present Fort Barrancas. It was burned by the French after its capture in 1719.

nished,



nished, but in the streets you walk up to the ankle in sand. The ladies never come abroad but when they go to church, and that always with a train and a gravity which is not to be seen any where but amongst the Spaniards.

Next day after our arrival, which was on the twenty-ninth, there was a grand dinner at the serjeant major's. We had seen this officer formerly at Louisiana, and had treated him magnificently, so that he was ravished with this opportunity of shewing his gratitude.

He had entered into a particular intimacy and friendship with Mons. Hubert, who was then *commissaire ordonnateur*, a kind of surveyor, and who <sup>[346]</sup> was then with us. We learnt that a daughter of his friend three years of age, and whom her father was conveying back into France, was no more than sprinkled, and he was therefore desirous the remaining part of the ceremonies of the Sacrament of Baptism should be performed here, and that he should stand godfather. This was performed with great ceremony, and under a discharge of the cannon; the godmother was a niece of the governor's, who gave at night a magnificent supper, and by an excess of politeness, rare enough amongst Spaniards, would have the ladies to be present at it. He concluded so many civilities with furnishing us with provisions to enable us to continue our journey, tho' he had not as yet received the convoy which was to supply him with provisions from the Havannah, and had for that reason refused any to the officers of Biloxi: but our situation had touched him extremely.

We set out on the thirtieth, with the two shallops, and were saluted by the fort with five pieces of cannon. We advanced seven leagues that day, and came to an anchor at the mouth of a river which comes from a bay which opens to the south-east. At eleven at night the wind becoming



coming favourable, we took the advantage of it and sailed west north-west; the whole coast lies open to the same winds for twenty leagues, as far as the island of *Saint Rose*; <sup>18</sup> and there is not one place where you can be sheltered from the squalls or gales of wind which should come large or full upon the shore. On the thirty-first at four in the afternoon, we had sailed these twenty leagues, and came to an anchor behind the island, which incloses the great bay of St. Rose, the entry of which is dangerous when the sea is high. Had we been but a moment <sup>[347]</sup> later we should have been hard put to it, the wind changing suddenly from north-east to south-west, and the sea rising so high at the same instant, that it had been impossible for us to ride it out.

On the first of June, towards two or three in the morning, the tide beginning to flow we reimbarked, and after advancing a short league, entered the channel of St. Rose, which is fourteen leagues in length. <sup>19</sup> It is formed by the island of St. Rose which is of this length, but very narrow, appearing to be covered with sand, but for all that not ill wooded: the continent is very high, and bears trees of all sorts: the soil is almost as sandy as at St. Mark, but on digging ever so short a way into the ground, you meet with water. The wood here is very hard, but easily rots. All this coast swarms with game, and the sea with fish. The channel is narrow at the mouth, but grows broader afterwards, and retains as far as the Bay of Pensacola half a league of breadth; the current here was very strong, but favourable for us.

Towards eleven o'clock, we doubled the *Pointe aux Chevreuils*, or Roebuck point, beyond which the bay be-

<sup>18</sup>The long island of Santa Rosa protects a sound of the same name. On its western extremity Bienville landed on his first expedition against Pensacola. Here the Spaniards after 1722 built the second Fort Pensacola. It is now the site of Fort Pickens.

<sup>19</sup>Now called Santa Rosa Sound.

gins.<sup>20</sup> Here you turn first to the north, and afterwards to the north-east. The fort stands a short league farther, and you discover it from the point *aux Chevreuils*. We arrived here at noon, and were much surprised to see it in so bad a condition, and it appears to be pretty much neglected.<sup>21</sup> The Sieur Carpeau de Montigni who commands in it, was gone to Biloxi, and we only found a few soldiers in it. The Spanish fort which was taken two years ago by the Count de Champmêlin,<sup>22</sup> was behind this, and there remains nothing of it but a very fine cistern, which is said to have cost four-<sup>[348]</sup>teen thousand piastres building. Both of them stand on the island, almost close to the main land, and not above fifteen toises long; and the soil of which appears to be none of the best.

The bay of Pensacola would be a very good port, were it not for the worms which eat thro' the bottoms of ships, and if its entry had a little more depth of water. But the *Hercules*, on board of which Mons. Champmêlin was, struck upon it. This entry is directly between the western extremity of St. Rose, where the Spaniards had also built a fort,<sup>23</sup> and a reef of rocks. It is so narrow that one ship only can pass at a time: its opening lies north and south. Beyond the reef is another pass, where there is only water for small vessels, and which opens to the south-west. This is also very narrow. The anchorage of ships in the bay of

<sup>20</sup> Pointe aux Chevreuils was the southeastern point of the mainland of Pensacola Bay.

<sup>21</sup> After the second capture of Fort Pensacola, the admiral of the French fleet claimed the right to choose the commandant, to Bienville's mortification. The post, therefore, was not dependent upon Louisiana.

<sup>22</sup> Count Desnade de Champmeslin was admiral of the French fleet, which arrived in Louisiana in time to coöperate with the second French expedition against Pensacola.

<sup>23</sup> This fort was a smaller Spanish outpost which stood on the western end of Santa Rosa Island. The *Hercules* was the Admiral's flag-ship, which drew twenty-one feet of water. Although it grazed on a reef, it was carried into the harbor by a very skillful Canadian pilot.

Pensacola, is along the island of *St. Rose*, and is very good holding ground.

We set out from Pensacola at midnight, and about four in the morning we left on our right the *Rio de los Perdidos*: this river was so named, because a Spanish ship was cast away in it, and all the crew lost.<sup>24</sup> The island Dauphine is five leagues farther on the left, and is five leagues long, but very narrow. Here is at least one half of this island without a single tree on it, and the other is not a whit better. The fort, and the only human habitation remaining on it, are in the western part of it. Between this, and the *Isle à Corne*, which is about a league distant, there is scarce any water. At the end of this, is another very small one called *l'isle Ronde*, on account of its figure.<sup>25</sup> We passed the night on this last.

[349] Opposite, is the *Baye des Pascagoulas*, where Madame de Chaumont has a grant, which is not likely very soon to repay the money advanced on it. There is a river of the same name which comes from the north, and discharges itself into the same bay.<sup>26</sup> Next day about ten o'clock, one of our sailors died of a quinsey. This is the only man we lost in our tiresome and dangerous passage. An hour after we came to an anchor at Biloxi, where every body was astonished to see us. I went immediately to celebrate the Holy Mass, to render thanks to Almighty God, for having supported us amidst so many fatigues, and delivered us from so many dangers.

*I am, &c.*

<sup>24</sup> Now the Perdido River, boundary between Florida and Alabama.

<sup>25</sup> Still called Round Island.

<sup>26</sup> Pascagoula Bay and River of eastern Mississippi, on which was a concession granted Madame de Chaumont. In January, 1721, three hundred colonists were landed there.

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## LETTER THIRTY-FIFTH.

*Voyage from Biloxi to Cape François in St. Domingo.*

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CAPE FRANÇOIS, September 6, 1722.

M A D A M ,

**I** DID not venture to tell you in my last letter what I had informed you of in my former, that you should hear no more from me, till I should arrive at Cape François, for fear I should not be able to keep my word, and indeed my apprehensions were very near being justified by the event. I am, however, at last arrived at this so long desired harbour, having entered it at a time when we had almost lost all hopes of ever seeing it. But before I enlarge upon the adventures of this voyage, I must resume the course of my journal.

The first news we learned upon our arrival at Biloxi was, that a peace was concluded with Spain, and a durable alliance agreed on betwixt the two crowns. One article of the peace was, the restitution of Pensacola, the news of which was brought to Louisiana by Dom. Alexander Walcop, an Irish-<sup>[352]</sup> man, and captain of a vessel in New-Spain. He had embarked at la Vera Cruz on board a brigantine, commanded by Dom. Augustin Spinola, and carrying one hundred and fifty men, and mounting

ing



ing fourteen pieces of cannon. It is given out here, that the Spaniards intend to make a great settlement at Pensacola, and to transport thither the garrison with the whole inhabitants of St. Joseph; and that D. Alexander Walcop is to be the governor, who is a man of an exceeding good appearance, great piety, and extreme good sense.<sup>1</sup>

D. Augustin Spinola is a young man full of fire, and of a very amiable character; his sentiments and behaviour sufficiently declare his high birth, and are every way worthy of the name he bears. He is lieutenant of the vessel, and has engaged to serve three years in Mexico, after which he proposes to return to Spain, and there to settle. He was a good deal chagrined on being informed, that an English interloper called Marshal, had just left the road of Biloxi, where he had been carrying on a considerable trade with the French as he left it. This man would not have gone, saying he was not afraid of the Spaniards, had not M. de Bienville obliged him to it, not chusing to be spectator of a combat, which our officers imagined would not end in the favour of the aggressors though superior in force. We shall soon see if they were mistaken in this advantageous idea they had conceived of Marshal.

Notwithstanding some of the company's ships had brought in some provisions to Louisiana, yet the scarcity there was still very great, and the discontent of the inhabitants encreased every day so much, that in spite of all the care M. de Bienville took <sup>[353]</sup> to make them easy, nothing was heard of but schemes for deserting. Besides,

<sup>1</sup>Peace having been concluded between the two crowns of Spain and France, the viceroy of New Spain despatched an Irish officer, whose name is spelled by some authorities Wauchop, both to inform the governor of Louisiana of the peace, and to take over Pensacola. La Harpe, who went to the latter place to bring back the French garrison, reported that Walcop was building a new fort on Santa Rosa Island.



the sloop which we had met on the route from St. Mark to St. Joseph, all the Swiss, who were at Biloxi with their captain and officers at their head, having been ordered for New Orleans on board a coaster, which had been extremely well victualled and fitted out on purpose for them, instead of steering for the Mississippi, had been seen with their colours flying, standing for the eastward; and it was not doubted, intended for Carolina, as being all protestants, there was no probability of their stopping any where among the Spaniards.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, I discovered on the 8th of June a conspiracy formed to carry off the Spanish brigantine. About seven o'clock in the evening, I got secret information of it, and was assured that before nine o'clock it would be put in execution, the commander of the brigantine not being used to go on board before that time. The conspirators were to the number of an hundred and fifty, and their intention was, if they succeeded in their enterprize, to turn pirates. I immediately sent to give notice of it to M. de Bienville, who was then at table with D. Augustin Spinola, who rose up that instant and went on board, and the major of Biloxi had orders immediately to go the rounds.

From these different movements the conspirators perceived their design had taken air, and the major could not observe above four or five men together, who making off as soon as he saw them, he was not able to lay hold on any of them, so that it was believed I had given a false alarm; but besides that for some time after, the soldiers and inhabitants were every day disappearing, some of these [354] deserters being retaken, confessed the conspiracy of which I had given information.

<sup>2</sup>We have since learned that they have gone there.—CHARLEVOIX. Governor Nicholson reported to the Board of Trade the landing of these deserters at his capital.

On the 12th, one of the chiefs of the Tchactas came to inform M. de Bienville, that the English had made them great promises, to bring them over to their interest, and to engage them to have no more commerce with the French. On this occasion the commandant gave a proof of his great dexterity in managing the Indians. He so well cajoled this chief, that, by means of a few inconsiderable presents, he sent him back extremely well disposed to remain firm in our alliance.<sup>3</sup> This nation would have occasioned us great trouble, had they declared against us; the Chicachas, Natchez, and Yasous would have immediately joined them, and there would have been no longer any safety in our navigating on the Mississippi; even though these four nations had not carried all the rest along with them; which, however, in all probability, would have been the case.

About the end of the month, an inhabitant of the country of the Illinois, who had been trading at the Missouri,<sup>4</sup> arrived at Biloxi, and gave an account, that he and one or two Frenchmen more, having penetrated as far as the Octotatas, who in 1719 defeated the Spaniards,<sup>5</sup> in the manner already mentioned, had been very well received by them; and that the goods they had carried along with them, had produced seven or eight hundred francs of silver, partly wrought, and partly in ingots; that some of these Indians had accompanied them as far as the Illinois, and had assured M. de Boisbriant,<sup>6</sup> that the Spaniards,

<sup>3</sup>The alliance of the Choctaw tribe made possible the continuance of Louisiana. Bienville skillfully utilized intertribal jealousies to maintain this powerful tribe in the French interest.

<sup>4</sup>This must have been one of the traders who accompanied Etienne Venyard Sieur de Bourgmont when in 1720 he built Fort Orleans on Missouri River. See Houck, *History of Missouri*, I, 258.

<sup>5</sup>For this event see *ante*, 59-61.

<sup>6</sup>Boisbriant was governor of Illinois. See sketch *ante*, 205, letter XXVIII, note 19.

from

from whom they had taken that money, got it from a mine at no <sup>[355]</sup> great distance from the place, where they encountered with them; and that they had offered to conduct the French thither, which offer the commandant had accepted. Time will inform us, whether these Indians have been more sincere than many others, who for a long time had been endeavouring to draw the French amongst them, with this bait of their having mines, all which have hitherto proved only imaginary.<sup>7</sup>

On the 22d, I embarked on board the *Bellona*, which set sail on the 30th. On the second of July, we reckoned ourselves north and south of Pensacola, from whence we thought it best to depart; because the longitude of the mouth of the Mississippi is not, as yet, well determined. Since that time till the twentieth, nothing remarkable happened. We had then the sun directly above our heads, and in our voyage from the Martyrs to Biloxi, had laboured under the greatest heats of the solstice, without being able to defend ourselves against them in any shape, no more than against the dews which fell during the nights in great abundance. Yet, would you believe it, Madam, we suffered much less from the heat in this season, than we had done in the month of April, before our ship wreck.

Nothing is, however, more certain, and I then called to mind, that I had been often much surprized to see persons born within the tropicks complaining heavily of the great heats in France. We were in the same situation in the month of April, we then experienced the same heats which <sup>[356]</sup> are felt in France and even in Italy; in the month of July, during the dog-days, we had the sun above our heads, and the heat was certainly much greater, but

<sup>7</sup>This mine has never been heard of since this time. — CHARLEVOIX.

more

more supportable. This difference does not arise from the winds, for we not only had them, but always have the same in both seasons. Neither was it owing to their being more accustomed to them, for we were not subject to those continual sweats which had been so troublesome to us in the month of April.

We must therefore search for some other reason, and this readily presents itself to me. In the spring, the air is still full of those vapours which have been collected during the winter. These vapours, at the approach of the sun, are at first set on fire, and this is what occasions those unsufferable heats and profuse sweats with which we were oppressed in the month of April; we were almost always as it were in *Bain Marie*.<sup>8</sup> These vapours are dissipated in the month of July, and though the sun was much nearer us, the least air of wind was sufficient to refresh us, by blunting the vigour of his rays, then almost perpendicular over our heads; whereas in France the sun never thoroughly dissipates the vapours, as he does between the tropicks, at least they are here not near so gross, which is the cause that produces, not only the difference of heat, but likewise of the sensation of that heat.

On the twentieth, we discovered the same land of Cuba which we had made in seven days, three months before. Two things occasioned this delay. The first was, the not being able to depend upon an observation, when the sun is so high, be-<sup>[357]</sup> cause at that time his rays make no sensible angle: on which account, when there is the least suspicion of being near the land, sailors dare not carry much sail in the night-time. The second was, that the captain of the *Bellona* was resolved to touch at the *Havannah*; and, being persuaded, that the currents set to

<sup>8</sup> A noted watering place of France, where hot baths were given.

the



the east, he made as much westing as he thought necessary, not to overshoot his port.

He was, however, very near passing by the Havannah, without knowing it. I was told, early in the morning, that they saw land; I asked how it appeared, and from the description he gave me, I was certain, that it was *Cape de Sed*. They laughed at me, and two officers of the *Adour*, who were with us, were the first to maintain that I was mistaken. I got upon deck and still persisted in my opinion contrary to that of the whole crew, our pilots assuring us, that we were sixty leagues farther to the west. At sun-set I perceived the table of Marianne, but I was still singular in my opinion; in the meantime we had a contrary wind, which obliged us to tack all night, standing out to sea-wards, and then afterwards, in towards the shore.

On the morrow, at mid-day, we were still in sight of the two lands which had been the subject of our dispute, when drawing nearer the shore, we perceived the Havannah before us, which gave great joy to the captain, he having a large private adventure, which he expected to dispose of to advantage among the Spaniards. His interest did not concern me; but if we had been farther out at sea, and had not had contrary winds during the <sup>1358</sup> night, the mistakes and obstinacy of our pilots and officers had cost us dear. The wind was fair for the Havannah, and about five in the evening we were about a league from it, when we fired two guns, one upon hoisting our colours, and the other after we had made a signal with the ensign, for a pilot from the fort.

None appearing, it was resolved to send the canoe to ask leave to go in; but it being now late, this was deferred till next day, and the whole night was spent in tacking.

On



On the twenty-third, an officer of the *Bellona* went ashore, in order to ask the governor's permission to water and purchase provisions in his harbour; because we had not been able to lay in a sufficient quantity at Biloxi. This was only a pretence, which I did not then know, and the captain desiring me to accompany his officer, I thought myself obliged to comply with his request.

The entrance of the port of the Havannah lies north-west quarter west: on the left-hand, on going in, is a fort built upon a rock, at the foot of which all vessels must pass: it is called the fort *du More*.<sup>9</sup> It is a solid building, and has three good batteries of brass cannon, one above the other. On the right-hand is a row of bastions, which seemed to me to be newly finished, or but lately repaired. The entrance is in this place but five or six hundred paces in breadth, and is shut up with an iron chain, which would stop a ship for a considerable time, till having shattered it with cannon-shot they should be able to break through it.

[359] The passage grows afterwards a little larger, till you come to the town, which is about the distance of two or three hundred paces. The channel turns from thence to the left beyond the town, which lies upon the right, and this is all I can say of it, having been no farther. The town takes up the point of a peninsula; and the land side, which is its whole length, is defended by a good wall with bastions. It has a very agreeable prospect, after you have passed the fort *du More*. The streets are well laid out, the quay large and in good condition, and the houses, for the most part, well built; the churches are pretty numerous, and some of them make a good appearance, but I did not visit any of them. In a word, a town in which there is twenty thousand inhabitants does not make a finer

<sup>9</sup>The famous Morro Castle at the entrance to Havana harbor.

show,

show, but the Havannah, as I have been told, has not near that number.

On my landing, I met with several sailors who had belonged to the Adour, and of those who had gone both in the shallop and in the canoe. The first informed me, that they had been five days in making this port, from the place where they were cast away, having been almost the whole time in the most immediate danger of perishing. I had not time to learn, by what means the second had got there. But the surgeon who went on board our canoe at fort du More as our guide, took great pains to shew me Marshal's brigantine, mentioned in the beginning of this letter. He had cast anchor along-side of a sloop so very small that it could not contain above fifteen or twenty men, who, however, carried her by boarding. It must be confessed, that the crews of the armed vessels <sup>[360]</sup> belonging to Cuba and the neighbouring islands are very brave, our buccaneers having been enured to war: but considering the disproportion of force, the valour and cannon of the English, these last must needs have been surprized.

The governor received us coldly, and after having heard us, told us, that he should have been very glad to have granted our request, but that the King his master had tied his hands, in particular, expressly forbidding him to receive into the harbour any vessel coming from Louisiana. He added, that there we might stop without any danger, and furnish ourselves with what refreshments we stood in need of. We were obliged to rest contented with this answer, and after paying a visit to the rector of the Jesuit's college in this city, I returned on board.

Next day being the 24th, we were north of the Pain of Matanzas, and at half an hour after eleven opposite to the

the *Rio de Ciroca*, where there is a Spanish settlement.<sup>10</sup> But as the captain was resolved to try if he could succeed better at Matanzas than he had done at the Havannah; and we were still at the distance of seven leagues from it, he turned to and fro during the whole night; and, on the twenty-fifth, at break of day we found ourselves at the entrance of the bay, which is two leagues over.

But, before you go in, you must first double a point which does not advance very far into the sea, then make a west course for the space of a league <sup>[361]</sup> after which you perceive on the same hand, being the right, another point, behind which lies the fort, and a long quarter of a league farther the town of Matanzas, between two rivers which wash its walls on each side.<sup>11</sup> About ten o'clock an officer was sent to the fort in a canoe, who did not find the commandant at home. He informed the lieutenant of the pretended necessity we were in; but this officer told him, he could not take it upon himself to grant him the permission he demanded; that all he could do was to send a courier to the Havannah, to know the intentions of the governor of that city, who was his general; and that if this suited us, we might wait at anchor on the other side, where we should be in more safety.

This answer, together with the declaration which the pilots then thought fit to make, that they could not undertake to carry the vessel into the bay of Matanzas, by reason they were not sufficiently acquainted with it, at last determined the captain to continue his course, with all his adventure on board, for the sake of which he had made us lose at least fifteen days of our most precious

<sup>10</sup> Now la Boca de Jaruca, just east of Havana Bay.

<sup>11</sup> The Yumuri and San Juan rivers.

time.

time. The next day at six in the morning, we had still behind us and within sight the Pain of Matanzas, from which we reckoned ourselves distant from 12 to fifteen leagues; and, on the 27th, at five in the morning, we discovered the land of Florida, from the mast-head.

Upon seeing this, we steered north-north-east; two hours afterwards, we steered a little more eastward, but at nine o'clock kept our former course, and found ourselves in the real current of <sup>[362]</sup> the gulph; for we went like an arrow out of a bow. At this time we saw the Adour from the mast-head, whose hull was almost entirely under water, and now perceived that she was not cast away at the northernmost of the Martyrs, as some had believed; for we were abreast of her at half an hour after ten, and half an hour after one, the last of these islands was still to the northward of us.

About three o'clock, we saw from the tops a breaker, close along-side of which our course lay, and somewhat farther a shoal, which run out into the offing. This shoal seemed to be the end of the Martyrs, and in order to clear it, we steered the remaining part of the day south and by east, the current still carrying us to the northward, and about evening we made a north-east course. On the twenty-eighth at mid-day, the pilot reckoned himself at the entrance of the gulph, being in twenty-five degrees thirty minutes; but, at half an hour after seven, fearing he was too near the land, he turned her head south-south-east till mid-night with a very good wind. At mid-night he continued his former course; and on the twenty-ninth we were out of sight of land. At sun-set we reckoned we were out of the gulph, but for the greater safety we steered north-north-east, till ten o'clock.

During



During all the rest of our voyage, till our arrival at Cape François,<sup>12</sup> we had light winds and frequently calms. From time to time there arose storms, when the sky and sea were on fire, and the vessel lying along on one side, went like the <sup>[363]</sup> wind; but this did not last, and rain of a quarter of an hour's duration cleared the sky and laid the waves of the sea; which greatly resembled those persons, who are of a soft and mild temper, but are sometimes liable to violent fits of passion, which, however, are soon appeased. I imagine that the currents contribute to calm the sea so speedily after these violent agitations. They are indeed very sensibly felt throughout all this passage, and, besides, with their continual variation, disconcert the most expert pilots.

After leaving the gulph of Florida, the streight course for St. Domingo would be south-east; but the winds, which almost constantly blow from the eastern quarter, prevent this course being steered, so that it is necessary to go as high as Bermudas, which it would even be convenient to make, if possible, in order to be certain of the longitude. For want of this, vessels are sometimes obliged to go as far to the northward as the great bank of Newfoundland, that they may be sure of being far enough to the eastward to avoid all those rocks which lie to the northward of St. Domingo.

This great circuit, however, has not always been taken in going from the gulph of Mexico to this island. At the first discovery of the new world, after coasting along the northern side of Cuba, as far as point *Itaque*,<sup>13</sup> which is its eastern extremity, about fourteen leagues from Matan-

<sup>12</sup> Le Cap François was on the northern coast of the Island of San Domingo; it was at this time the capital of the French West Indies.

<sup>13</sup> Now called Cape Maisi.



zas, they turned to the right, leaving on the left all the Lucayo islands, of which Bahama is the chief. This is what is called the <sup>[364]</sup> old straits of Bahama, in which there is water for the largest ships, but so full of rocks and shoals, that at present it is only used by small vessels.

After having made the latitude of thirty degrees and a half, our pilots reckoned themselves far enough to the east to steer south, without fear of falling upon any of those shoals I have mentioned. They therefore steered boldly to the south, and in a few days made great way, sailing continually upon a fine sea, and carried along by the trade winds. On the twenty-seventh of August the man who was looking out at the mast-head, cried out *Land*, which occasioned a great joy, which, however, was but short; for on his coming down and being asked if it was high land, he answered that it was very low, consequently could be no other than one of the *Caicos* or *Turk islands*.<sup>14</sup>

We were very lucky in seeing them by day, for had we fallen in with them in the night, we must have been infallibly ship-wrecked and every person lost; for these islands have no banks, most of them are surrounded with reefs of rocks, which run far out to sea, between which there are small channels, where there is not water enough for a shallop. Besides, they are so very low, that they are not seen in the night-time, till one is upon them.

But our having discovered our danger did not save us; the land which we saw before us seem- <sup>[365]</sup> ed a pretty large island and well-wooded in several places, which made us conclude it was the Grand Caicos, and consequently that we were forty or fifty leagues too far to the

<sup>14</sup>Still called by these names. There are the North Caicos, the Grand Caicos, the East Caicos, the South Caicos, and the Turk Islands.

westward.

westward. To gain our longitude, we must, perhaps, have been obliged to steer two or three hundred leagues to the northward, and laid our account with a voyage of five or six weeks. But this was impracticable; for we had scarce water and provisions for fifteen days, with the greatest œconomy. The captain was prodigiously embarrassed, he saw his pilots in the fault, he had reason to reproach himself with having reposed too much confidence in them, and not having taken an observation himself, and with having constantly preferred the opinion of the second pilot, a young blundering presumptuous fellow, to that of the first, who was a much abler and more experienced seaman, and never had approved their management.

It was, in the mean-time, necessary to take a resolution on the spot: had we met with a gale of wind at north, it would have thrown us upon these low lands, where we must all have infallibly perished. But as no measure could be pitched upon which had not its inconveniencies, the captain resolved to have the advice of all the people. One proposed a safe expedient, which was to bear away before the wind for Carolina, where we could arrive in ten or twelve days, and there purchase provisions. This advice was rejected and another followed, which put all to the hazard, and seemed to me to be solely inspired by despair; and this was to <sup>[366]</sup> coast along the grand Caicos, till we came to the opening between all these rocks and the Bahama islands.

This is the passage for all the vessels which return from St. Domingo to France, but then there is nothing to fear, for they can take their own time to enter the straits, and this passage lying open to the north-west, they are almost certain of having good weather to carry them through it. But in order to enter on the side in which we were, we  
must

must reckon on the north-east, and it is a great chance to find the wind on that point. Thus none that we know of have as yet attempted this passage. In short, we were resolved to run all hazards, and drew near the grand Caicos.

Two hours after mid-day, we were no more than a cannon-shot from it, and, perhaps, we were the first, who without an indispensable necessity had ventured so near it in a ship. The coast is, however, very clear, and about seven or eight foot high, sometimes a little more, but steep and without any beach. The soil has not every where the appearance of being barren. Geographers place this island directly under the tropick, which was a point we could not examine into, it being then hazy weather; but I believe it lies a little farther to the southward, for there certainly is not three degrees difference of latitude, between this island and Cape François.

We coasted along the grand Caicos till four o'clock in the evening, having both wind and <sup>[367]</sup> currents in our favour. Then sending a man up to the mast-head to observe what was before us, he soon came down, telling us that he had seen the extremity of the island; but that beyond it he could discover nothing but low lands intersected with channels in which the water appeared entirely white. Upon hearing this, we thought proper to tack, and lay the vessel's head north-north-east. At mid-night we lay south-south-east, and it seemed as if the wind turned about at our pleasure; but it was very weak and the currents carried us with great violence to the westward; so that at break of day the low lands and shoals which we the evening before saw so far a-head of us, were now almost as far behind us, and the passage we were in quest of began to open.

The moment now approached which was to decide our fate, and what gave us great hopes was, that the wind by  
degrees

degrees veered about to the north-east. At eleven o'clock we lay south-east one quarter south, and soon after south-east; but the currents made us fall so fast to leeward, that we scarce made a south course. At noon we had no observation, and the western point of the Caicos lay north quarter north-east. At last, in an hour's time we were got into the passage; and I cannot better explain to you what appeared on the faces of all, in proportion as we advanced in the channel, than by comparing it to what happens to those animals which are put into the receiver of an air-pump, and lie as dead when the air is almost all extracted out of it, <sup>[368]</sup> but are restored to life by degrees, when it is suffered slowly to enter again.

We durst not, however, flatter ourselves with being able to make Cape François, which lay to the windward, but we could not miss *Port de paix*,<sup>15</sup> or at least *Leogane*; and after the extreme danger we had just escaped, we thought ourselves very lucky, provided we could get into any harbour. At mid-night, we had a pretty violent gale of wind at south, but of short duration; and next day about nine o'clock in the morning, we perceived the land of St. Domingo, but could not distinguish what part it was all that day, it being very foggy. A vessel, which we reckoned from her appearance might be a privateer, took us up a good part of the afternoon: we prepared seriously for an engagement, or rather to defend ourselves in case we should be attacked; for we did not change our course to give chase.

At last we discovered, she was only a small vessel, a hundred and fifty tons burthen at most, and was probably more afraid of us. By her course we imagined she had

<sup>15</sup>Port de Paix is on the north shore of San Domingo Island, in the modern Haiti, behind Tortuga Island.

come out of Cape François, and seemed to be deep loaded. The whole night we made tacks to the north-east, with a little variation, which gained us ground, and as soon as it was day, we perceived to our great joy, that we were to the windward of Cape François. We had a full view of it, and were almost close in with it, but there was so little wind, that we could not get in before the first of September, at four o'clock in <sup>1369</sup> the evening. Since that time I have not had as yet a moment to myself to give you an account of this country; and this letter is asked from me to put on board a vessel which is bound for Nantes. I intend to depart myself in fifteen days for Havre de Grace, from whence I shall have the honour to write you once more.

*I am, &c.*



## LETTER THIRTY-SIXTH.

*Description of Cape François in St. Domingo. Return to France, and the Author's touching in England.*

---

ROUEN, January 5, 1723.

MADAM,

I STAID but a day at Havre, not caring to miss the Rouen coach, and am come here to refresh myself after the longest and severest voyage I have ever as yet made at sea. I am now entirely recovered, and shall make use of the short leisure my waiting for the Paris coach affords me, to finish the account of all my adventures for these last two years and an half I have been rambling over the different parts of the world.

Cape François in St. Domingo, is the harbour where the French carry on the greatest trade in all America. Properly speaking, it is only a bay, not quite a league in depth, the entrance of which <sup>[372]</sup> is very wide: but this entrance is encumbered with reefs, in sailing betwixt which too much precaution cannot be used. On going in, you must keep on your right along a point on which is a redoubt mounted with cannon; but it is customary before engaging in these narrow passes, where two ships cannot go a-breast, to get a pilot from the fort; and in order to prevent

prevent the desire of saving a pistole, which is his fee, from occasioning people to risk the losing their vessels, it is very wisely ordered, that this sum shall be paid, even should they come in without his assistance.

The town stands in the bottom of the bay, upon the right side. It is not very considerable, because almost all but those who are tradesmen, shop-keepers, soldiers, or inn-keepers, reside in the plain, as much as their duty will suffer the officers; the exercise of justice, the magistrates; and the affairs of trade those who are concerned in it, that is to say, almost all those who are reckoned here people of credit: so that, in order to see genteel company, you must go to the country. Thus nothing can be more charming than the plain, and the vallies betwixt the mountains with which it is surrounded. The houses are not magnificent but decent and convenient, and the roads are in a streight line, of a good breadth, bordered with hedges of citrons, and sometimes planted with large trees, and cut from space to space with rivulets of a clear fresh water. All the plantations seem very well cultivated, and are indeed very fine pleasure-houses: an air of ease is every where to be seen, which gives a great deal of pleasure.

[373] This plain is the north-west extremity of that famous *Vega Real*, so much spoke of in the Spanish histories of St. Domingo, and said to be eighty leagues in length, and by the famous bishop of Chiappa, Bartholomew de las Casas,<sup>1</sup> to be watered by five and twenty thousand rivers. But sounding names cost the Spaniards nothing; these pretended rivers are, for the most part, nothing but small brooks, the

<sup>1</sup>Bartolomé de Las Casas, called the apostle to the Indies, was born in Seville in 1474. His first voyage to America took place in 1502; thereafter he passed much time there, being bishop of Chiapas in Mexico 1544-1547. He was a Dominican monk, and passionately devoted to the work for the Indians. He was the author of several volumes, the best known of which is *Historia de las Indias*. He died at Madrid in 1566.

number of which is indeed incredible, and would render this royal plain something more delightful and charming than the valley of Tempe, so much boasted of among the Greeks, if it did not lie within the torrid zone. There are even places where the air is extremely wholesome, and heat supportable, such as that where the town of *St. Jago de los Cavalleros* has been built;<sup>2</sup> and the same thing may be said of the vallies between the mountains, with which the plain of the Cape is bounded to the southward. They are beginning to be peopled, and will be soon more so than the plain itself, on account that there are few sick people there; and that those who come from other places soon recover of their distempers, after all other remedies have failed of success.

I was in all the plantations near the town, but had not leisure to make many observations on them. Besides, in the day-time it was extremely hot; and in the evening after sun-set, muskettoes and other such like insects prevented me from walking far. These insects fix particularly upon new comers, who have a tenderer skin and fresher blood. I have been informed, that in the Spanish part of this island, they are free from this inconvenience; but in recompence we have no venomous serpents, of which they have great numbers. <sup>[374]</sup> It has likewise been observed to me, that all garden stuff, except lettuce, must in this island be renewed every year with seed from Europe.

The most curious things I have seen here are the sugar-mills; but I shall say nothing of them, as Father Labat has treated of them in a much better manner than I can pretend to do.<sup>3</sup> Next to the sugar, the greatest riches of this

<sup>2</sup> Now Santiago in the highlands of the Dominican Republic on a river of the same name.

<sup>3</sup> Jean Baptiste Labat (1663–1738) was a Dominican missionary to the French West Indies, who arrived in 1693 at Martinique. His *Nouveaux Voyages aux Isles de l'Amérique* was published in 1722.

colony consists in the Indigo, which the same author has likewise handled very learnedly. This plant has an irconcilable enemy, which makes as great havock amongst it, as darnel does among our corn. It is an herb called *Mal nommée*, and in springing from the earth carries a seed which spreads every where. It grows in a tuft, and by its bulk, and prodigious fruitfulness, stifles the Indigo in such a manner that it kills it; so that if it makes the least progress in a field, it is entirely lost.

The coasts of St. Domingo are not very plentifully supplied with fish; but a little out at sea, all sorts of them are to be found. Coming from Louisiana, we caught, in particular, a great many gilt-heads or bonettas, upon which fish our seamen pretend to have made a very singular observation. Which is, that when this fish is caught before the moon comes to its height, its flesh is firm and of an exquisite taste, whereas when it is taken in the wane, it is insipid, of no consistence, and looks like flesh boiled to rags. It is true, that we experienced both the one and the other, in the two seasons; but that this always happens, and that the moon is really the cause of it, is what I cannot take upon me to affirm.

[375] We departed from Cape François in a merchant ship belonging to Havre called *Louis de Bourbon*, and commanded by one of the ablest navigators I have known: but we were scarce out at sea when we perceived that she made water in two places, so that during the whole passage, which lasted for ninety-two days, they were obliged to pump morning and evening, which together with the scarcity of provisions, which, indeed, had been laid in, in abundance, but had been by no means managed during the first month, occasioned our captain to be frequently upon the point of touching at the Azores. We  
should

should have been reduced to greater inconveniencies still, had we fallen into the snare which a captain of an English ship laid for us, whom we fell in with about half way.

He had left Jamaica, in company with a fleet, of which, as he said, he had been at first the best sailor; but in loading his ship, having been so imprudent as to stow all his provisions in the same place, it happened, that in proportion as these were consumed, his vessel lost her trim, and by degrees that advantage he had over the rest, so that at last he was left behind by the whole fleet: we met him, indeed, alone and going so slowly, that compared with him our vessel, which was by no means a flyer, went like a bird; and he was afraid that his provision should entirely fail him, before he could reach England. He told us his uneasiness at this, and to explain himself better, invited himself to dine on board us. He was answered, that he should be very welcome, and our captain shortened sail to wait for him.

[376] During dinner-time the conversation turned upon our course, and he asked us where we believed we were. The captain shewed him, at which he appeared surprized. He assured us afterwards that we were at least two hundred leagues farther advanced than we thought we were; which he endeavoured to prove by the last lands he had observed. This gave great pleasure to the most part of our people, who were already very uneasy at so long a passage, and at being obliged to struggle continually against boistrous winds and a tempestuous sea, in a very crazy vessel. But I had some suspicion that the English Captain only said we were so far advanced, in order to induce us to part with some of our provisions. I communicated my suspicion to our captain, who told me he was of the same opinion, and contented himself with treating our guest genteelly



genteelly and evading his demand. He continued his course upon his own reckoning, which he found so just, that he entered the channel the same day, and almost the same hour, he had said some time before he would do.

On the second of December, without any apparent necessity, we went into Plymouth harbour, but our captain had certainly some business there. We found there *la Thetis* a King's frigate, which a gale of wind had entirely disabled, though it was her first voyage from Havre de Grace, where she had been built. She was under the command of the Chevalier de Fontenay, who was bound for the American islands against the pirates, who had lately taken a great many vessels. As soon as he knew I was in the harbour, he did me the honour of paying me a visit, before I could have the opportunity of paying my duty to him, and carried me on board his vessel, where I spent in a very <sup>[377]</sup> agreeable manner, all the time I was in this port.

Plymouth is one of the five large ports of England, and one of the finest in Europe. It is a double one, and before you enter it you must pass under the cannon of the citadel. From thence you turn to the right, in order to go into the town harbour, which is the smallest, and there the *Thetis* lay at an anchor. You turn to the left, in order to enter the other harbour, where the King's vessels are laid up opposite to a magnificent arsenal. This harbour is of great extent, and we anchored at its mouth, because the wind was then fair to go higher up the channel.

The town of Plymouth is of no great consequence, but the country about it where I frequently amused myself with walking, is very agreeable. I have not seen a richer country: the weather was very mild, the fields as green as in spring; and I saw sheep of a monstrous size feeding up-  
on

on them. Their wool is very good, but their flesh being too gross has a bad relish; their beef, on the other hand, is excellent, because it is very fat.

On the eve of the Conception and all the day of the festival, they never ceased ringing in one of the two belfreys which are at Plymouth; and though there were but two bells, I never heard ringing which gave me greater pleasure. I asked in whose honour this was done; for I suspected that it was not done in honour of the holy virgin, and was told that it was a custom in this country, when any one makes a great enter-<sup>[378]</sup>tainment, to pay the ringers for their trouble. I likewise observed just upon the harbour, and not far from the town, a large and very ancient building, which was made use of for an inn, but did not seem to have been built for that purpose; I was told, that it was the remains of a celebrated abbey of the Benedictines.

I should have been well pleased to take the tour of Plymouth and the country about it, but the Chevalier de Fontenay advised me against it; because every thing was then suspected in England, on account of the affair of the Bishop of Rochester, which was still recent.<sup>4</sup> I could not, indeed, appear in my habit at Plymouth, or in places that were inhabited, without being exposed to some insult, and it was too late to put on another dress, several of the English having seen me in my own, so that I was reduced to the necessity of walking only in some fields near the harbour, where nobody was to be met with. I had, however, good company on board the *Thetis*. The Chevalier de

<sup>4</sup>Francis Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester, leader of the High Church party in England, was arrested in August, 1722, for complicity in a plot to bring the Pretender to England and place him on the throne. In May, 1723, Atterbury defended himself before the House of Lords, and in June was allowed to retire to France. All Frenchmen were, as Charlevoix states, suspected at this time of tension in England.

Fontenay has been all over the world, and has besides, an understanding extremely well cultivated. I have seen and heard of him, instances of a generosity truly heroick. But what crowns all these estimable qualities, is a great fund of religion and sincere piety. He seems to have communicated his sentiments to his officers, whom I saw almost all of them present at the sacraments, and nothing can be more edifying than his whole crew, by whom he is adored.

At last, on Christmas night, after I had celebrated three masses, we set sail, and the whole day had a fair wind. Two frigates of fifty guns each had weighed anchor two hours before us, which <sup>1379</sup> we soon came up with. This surprized me, because we did not sail very well ourselves; but what astonished me still more, was to see these vessels under sail, which, if I had not seen them get under way, I should not have believed to be the same, which appeared to be so large in the harbour; on which I was told this was owing to a particular construction, and manner of rigging, contrived on purpose to draw the pirates into a snare; and that on this account they are called in the style of sailors *des Attrapes Lourdeaux*. In effect, it is said, that the pirates seeing them, and judging them from their appearance to be merchantmen, bear down upon them, as to a certain prey. But when they are engaged in such a manner as not to be able to extricate themselves, they find whom they have to deal with, and are taken in the trap without being able to make any resistance; so that of all the nations of Europe, the English are those whom the pirates stand most in fear of, and whom they use worst when they can get them into their hands.

The night following, we met with as terrible a storm, as I have seen for a long time in the Channel. The next day in the morning, though the wind was almost entirely fallen,

en, the sea was still in such agitation as to terrify the bold-est; we even shipped some seas which put us in great danger; one, in particular, came into the cabbin, when I was beginning to say mass, which prevented me from going on; and when about noon we got into Havre de Grace, every one asked us how we had been able to bear up against the tempest, which had made its effects be felt even in the harbour.

[380] But they might have been still much more surprised how we came to stand it out, when two days after, our vessel being hauled ashore, fell to pieces through rottenness. This was the first news I heard after my arrival here. Judge you, Madam, on what tenure we held our lives on board such a vessel, during a voyage of eighteen hundred leagues, in a season when the sea is always in a fury; and what thanks we ought to render to Almighty God, not only for delivering us from so imminent a danger, but likewise for keeping it from our knowledge, which alone would have been sufficient to make us die a thousand times, through mere fear.

*I am, &c.*

*FINIS.*





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